The Dissertation Committee for Patricia Mary Burns
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Testing the Seams of the American Dream:

Minority Literature and Film in the Early Cold War

Committee:

_____
Brian Bremen, Supervisor

_____
Jennifer Wilks

_____
Julia Lee

_____
Karl Miller

_____
Michael Kackman

Testing the Seams of the American Dream:

Minority Literature and Film in the Early Cold War

by

Patricia Mary Burns, B.A.; M.A

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2011

Testing the Seams of the American Dream:

Minority Literature and Film in the Early Cold War

Patricia Mary Burns, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Brian Bremen

Testing the Seams of the American Dream: Minority Literature and Film in the Early Cold War delineates the concept of the liberal tolerance agenda in early Cold War. The liberal tolerance message of the U.S. government, the Democratic Party, and others endorsed racial tolerance and envisioned the possibility of a future free from racism and inequality. Filmmakers in often disseminated a liberal message similar to that of the politicians in the form of "race problem" films. My shows how these films and the liberal tolerance agenda as a whole promises racial equality to the racial minority in exchange for hard work, patriotism, education, and a belief in the majority culture. My first chapter, "Washing White the Racial Subject: Hollywood's First Black Problem Film," performs a close reading of Arthur Laurents 1946 play *Home of the Brave*, which features a Jewish American protagonist, in conjunction with a reading of the 1949 film version, which has an African American protagonist. The differences between the two texts reveal the slippages in the liberal tolerance agenda and signal the inability of filmmakers to envision racial equality on the big screen. "The American Institution and the Racial Subject," my second chapter, discusses the 1949 film *Pinky* as well as Américo Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*. All of these

works suggests that the attainment of education promises entry into the mainstream by racial minorities, yet Paredes and Sone question this process by interpreting it as resulting in the dual segregation of their protagonists. My third chapter, "Earning and Cultural Capital: The Work that Determines Place," looks at the promise that with hard work anyone can attain the American Dream. I show how the 1951 film *Go for Broke!*, Ann Petry's *The Street*, and José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* work to dispel this American myth. My final chapter, "The Regrets of Dissent: Blacklists and the Race Question," examines the 1954 film *Salt of the Earth* alongside Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and John Okada's *No-No Boy* to reveal the dangerous mixture of race and dissent in this era.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Unity Ideal

In Frank Capra's 1945 *Why We Fight: War Comes to America*, the narrator announces that men of all walks of life and backgrounds are responsible for making and keeping America what it is. The film flips through close up shots of the types of men fighting in the war – "Bookkeepers, soda jerks, mechanics, college students, rich man, poor man, mega man, thief, doctors, lawyers, merchants"[1] – and where they come from – "Men from the green hills of New England, the sun baked plains of the middle west, the cotton fields of the south, the close-packed streets of Manhattan, Chicago, the teaming factories of Detroit, Los Angeles, the endless stretching distances of the Southwest, men from the hills, and from the plains, from the villages and from the cities." The film, moving quickly through the story of American history (envisioned as industrial progress), then tells its audience about the racial and ethnic make-up of those who have contributed to America's success through the sweat of their labor: the English, the Scottish, the Dutch, the Italians, the Frenchmen, the Swiss, the Danes, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Poles, the Welshmen – some of these images are tied to a location or an occupation, and others are just listed, but all are accompanied by an image of men at labor. The narrator next lists "the Negro harvesting cotton in the hot sun." The film here, instead of using a close up of a black man's face, offers an extended visual of black cotton pickers, mostly women, and of a black child being gently pulled along atop a sack of cotton. The narrator continues, "[the sweat] of the Spaniard, the

[1] All quotes from the film are from my own transcription.

first to roam the great Southwest, of the Mexican, in the oil fields of Texas and on the ranches of New Mexico," the Greek, and the Portuguese. Then he adds, "the German, with his technical skills," and the Hungarian and the Russian. And, finally, the narrator concludes, "[the sweat] of the Irishman, the Slav, and the Chinese working side by side." Most of the men pictured are wearing traditional ethnic dress in order to more easily distinguish their backgrounds. The labor performed – homesteading, felling trees, planting seeds, etc. – is predominately labor associated with establishing a new country, including factory and foundry work. With this extensive list, the film displays a sense of awareness of the heterogeneous elements that make up America and promotes a celebration of America as made by and made up of polyglot and polyethnic pioneers.

From 1942 to 1945, Hollywood director Frank Capra made a series seven films for the War Department entitled *Why We Fight*.[2] Each about an hour long, the films detail the Axis rise to power and military aggression as well as show Americans and their allies valiantly defending themselves from the atrocities of the enemy. The series also argues that isolationism must come to an end, and that the Axis pose a direct threat to American values. In the first of the series, *Prelude to War*, Peter Rollins writes, "As the narrator explains, 'We lose the war and we lose everything: our honor, the jobs we work at, the books we read, the very food we eat, the hopes we have for our kids, the kids themselves" ("Frank" 83). The films were propaganda meant for those serving in the

[2] The subtitles of the seven films are: *Prelude to War* (1942), *The Nazi Strike* (1943), *Divide and Conquer* (1943), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1943), *The Battle of China* (1943), and *War Comes to America* (1944). These are sometimes referred to as P-1 through P-7.

American armed forces as well as for some limited foreign audiences. As Rollins tells us, however,

> After seeing *Prelude to War* in 1942, President Roosevelt told subordinates that 'every American should see these films.' When his Office of War Information opposed distribution to theaters across America because the films violated guidelines for treatment of enemy populations—for example, calling the Japanese 'buck-toothed friends' of the Germans—Roosevelt simply countermanded the restraint order. Roosevelt wanted Americans to see/hear forceful arguments against isolationism; in addition, he was not averse to their experiencing an in-your-face statement of Germany's global designs. ("Frank" 84)

Thus, the films were widely distributed in America during the war and, "By the end of the war, some 54 million Americans had seen the series" ("Frank" 84). The films and its director serve as an example of the collaboration between Hollywood's moviemakers and the United States War Department and Office of War Information (OWI) during World War II, a unity that served to produce government films with a Hollywood sheen, and Hollywood films with a government bent.[3] At the same time, much of the focus on American unity and on the promotion of American values that are represented in these

[3] For more on these linkages, see Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor's *Why We Fought: America's War in Film and History*, Thomas W. Bohn's *An Historical and Descriptive Analysis of the 'Why We Fight' Series*, David Culbert's "'Why We Fight': Social Engineering for a Democratic Society at War," and Thomas Cripps's *Making Movies Black*.

films seep into the postwar period with the advent of a new war against the global spread of Communism.

The final film of Capra's series, *War Comes to America* (1945), focuses on the American homefront and offers a domestic an answer to "why we fight" – the film delineates the values and beliefs worth protecting. Indeed, the film opens with a close up on three children saying the Pledge of Allegiance and then pans out to show a whole schoolyard of children saying it in unison. The film pans out again to focus on the American flag, and then fades into shots of American soldiers, of different backgrounds, fighting in combat overseas. Suggestive of just who the audience must rally to protect, the children also signify patriotism and dedication to a set of ideals – represented in the Pledge of Allegiance – that the film works to promote. Yet, the most notable value that the film stresses is racial equality. Narrated over images of famous monuments, icons of American history, and symbols of American progress, the film tells its audience that men now and throughout history have been "Fighting for their country and for more than their country. Fighting for an idea. The idea bigger than the country, without the idea the country may have remained only a wilderness. Without the country, the idea may have remained only a dream." This idea, the narrator tells us, is "the greatest force in all human relations": that "All men are created equal." The pinnacle of American idealism, then, is envisioned in the concept of racial and ethnic equality. Commenting on the long history of U.S. immigration, the narrator says, "A light was shining, freedom's light. From every country and every tribe, men saw that light and turned their faces toward it," and

then the narrator reads Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus," which emphasizes and celebrates the composite nature of American heritage as well as its reputation as welcoming to all.

The film's most salient message is racial equality in America. After he narrates the list of races and ethnicities, the narrator continues, "Yes, the sweat of the men of all nations built America, and the blood. For the blood of Americans has been freely shed. Five times in our history have we withstood the challenge of the idea that made our nation. The idea of equality for all men [long pause], life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The idea that made us the people we are."[4] The narration leaves little doubt about what is the most valued principle in America: equality. But there is also the suggestion that dying for one's country is a further indication that a racial or ethnic group has become "American." When the film shows various people receiving selective service draft notices, multiple ethnicities and races appear to be going off to war with their heads high.[5] This further suggests that all Americans play a part in the war effort, and are therefore serving to protect the same values that the film promotes. Finally, in describing America's enemies, the narrator tells us, "They organized to smash personal freedom, equality of man, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, organized to smash the very principles that make us who we are." The film then shows the cartoon image of

[4] Later the narrator says that all Americans are "passionately dedicated to the ideal our forefathers passed on to us, the liberty and dignity of man."
[5] It would be impossible to know the racial or ethnic make-up of these unlisted extras, and I make this judgment based on skin color, the atmosphere of the home, and the family that surrounds the draftee.

a Nazi soldier smashing the statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial. Lincoln's image again gestures toward racial equality, and the Us/Them mentality at work here further sends a message of unity and common cause to the mixed-race and multi-ethnic fighting forces and general American audience.

My project takes as a stepping off point the official line of racial tolerance that began to be put forth by the U.S. government in earnest with the preparation for and entry into World War II. The collaboration between filmmakers and the government during wartime is a key location for the articulation of the idea of democratic and social equality. The *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* tells its readers, "Motion pictures are better equipped than any other source of information, than any Government agency or spokesman, to create the emotional enthusiasm and the sense of individual responsibility which, combined, make for unceasing 'war-mindedness.'" The manual also clearly lays out the message it wants Hollywood to deliver about American values and about the state of racial tolerance in America. Riffing on Roosevelt's 1941 Four Freedoms Speech, the manual notes, "*We are fighting for freedom and against slavery* – for 1) freedom of speech, 2) freedom of religion, 3) freedom from want, 4) freedom from fear. We must make the Four Freedoms live and breathe." Much like Capra's film, the manual stresses, "We must emphasize that this country is a melting pot, a nation of many races and creeds, who have demonstrated that they can live together and progress. We must establish a genuine understanding of alien and minority groups and recognize their great contribution to the building of our

nation. In this war for freedom they fight side by side with us." While trying to create an Us/Them mentality between the Allies and the Axis, this sentence clearly creates an Us/Them binary between whites and the racial and ethnic Other in America. Nearly identical to the Capra's work, the manual states, "'America is you and me.' America is its workers and manufacturers, its farmers and tradesmen, its doctors and lawyers and teachers, its housewives and children. America is Catholic, Protestant and Jewish; it is English, Scandinavian, Polish, Dutch, Greek, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, German; it is all nations in one." This government manual offers an indication of the importance of establishing unity across racial and ethnic lines in America and the U.S. government's need to present itself as a tolerant nation.[6]

Within these claims for equality and wrapped up in the push toward unity are sets of values that nonetheless delimits a set of criteria prized as specifically "American." These values consist of behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that are consistent with the ideal image of American society. In *War Comes to America*, for example, the narrator tells its audience about the habits of Americans. He says, "we hunt, we fish;" "we love sports;" "we're probably the traveling-est nation" and we don't need passports; "We join clubs, fraternities, unions, federations;" "Radios, we have one in the living room, the dining room, the bed room, the bathroom, in our cars, in our hands, and

[6] Unity was also exceptionally important in the postwar moment: American unity became all the more important when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Truman administration began articulating a dangerous external and potent internal threat: Communism. As Arthur Schlesinger put it in 1949, "Free society and totalitarianism today struggle for the minds and hearts of men" (9). And, as Norman Markowitz, reflecting on the period, notes, "The idea of an inevitable struggle between freedom and slavery … thundered through the frightened years of the Cold War" (48).

up our sleeves," and the film shows a myriad of musical performances to represent our diverse heritage; "The press – the freest on earth" with over 12,000 newspapers and over 6,000 magazines; and, finally, "Churches, we have every denomination on earth," and "no one dares tell us where to go to." In summation, the narrator says, "That's roughly the kind of people we are, wholesome, easy going, sentimental." The vision of America that comes through here is one of prosperity, leisure, unity, innovation, and freedoms of the press and religion. The valued tropes that come through in the film and the manual are unity, belongingness, education, hard work, the home, and freedom of speech. And the message is that hard work, innovation, and patriotism will lead to unity and a sense of belongingness that are embodied in the rewards for hard work: a home, a good job, a family, and freedoms denied to others around the globe.

However, because the values and the privileges envisioned here are largely available to American whites and far harder to attain by racial and ethnic minorities, these aspects of American lifestyle, like the reality of equality that the film and the manual promote, are better figured as the promises of America than the realities. These promises – for a sense of belonging, for a home, for rewards for hard work, for education, and for personal freedoms – are contingent upon the adoption of these (white) values. Adopting white norms was widely discussed and understood in this era to be a proactive step toward participation in mainstream American society. As Seymour Martin Lipset put it in Daniel Bell's *The New American Right*, "The minority immigrant groups themselves have contributed to the support for conformity. One of the principle

reactions of members of such groups to discrimination—to being defined as socially inferior by the majority culture—is to attempt to assimilate completely American values, reject their past, and to overidentify with Americanism" (176). The promises of American democracy are present in much of the literature, film, and political and social thought of the war years and the in the early Cold War moment. My project delineates four key promises held out to racial and ethnic minorities in this era. The first promise suggested that you can be part of the American community if you give up your ethnic and racial ties and participate in wartime unity and patriotism; the second promise suggested that by giving up these racial and ethnic ties, one can enter the American mainstream through the attainment of education; the third promise suggests that the American Dream and prosperity were open to all who worked for it and that a safe and secure home and family would be the reward for hard work; and, finally, the fourth promise suggests that Americans have freedom of speech and of the press and therefore have a right to dissent and still be welcomed as a part of the American fabric. These promises and the values they address are prominent in *War Comes to America*, *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, and in political discourse and social thought from this era.

The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry tells its filmmaker readers that they must create a sense of belonging in the motion picture audience. It reads, "He must be made to understand that he is an integral part of the war front, and that if he loses the war, he loses everything." The manual also urges that

"War mindedness means, first of all, a sense of *personal involvement* in the war. It means a realization, on the part of Mr. Civilian that he has everything at stake – his home, his children, his hope for the future, his very life." The manual, in this instance, clearly envisions the male population of the U.S. as the defenders of freedom as well as the owners of homes and the heads of households. Combined with the emphasis that the manual places on presenting the war as fought by all races and creeds, then patriotism and "war mindedness," as well as stereotypical roles for men and women, are conditions for enjoying the lifestyle characterized by home, children, and a bright future. In *War Comes to America*, the vision of a lifestyle of freedom and leisure offers an inclusive sense of America that can encompass all of its citizens, but the actual images of American progress and leisure are nearly all white and male. The suggestion is that one will lose the ethnic dress and all that that means, and blend into the mechanized and progress-oriented society by becoming "white." This request for assimilation is envisioned here and elsewhere as "unity" in wartime and in the early Cold War. Unity, therefore, is tied to the concept of assimilation and to the promise that if you give up your racial and ethnic background, then you will become part of the American mainstream.[7]

[7] American unity, as proof of the success of capitalism and democracy, could further be applied to a progress narrative where racial strife and imperialist designs were gradually being overcome by a working democratic order. On a global scale, the concept of American unity was used as a bulwark against the threats emanating from a world war and a hostile postwar world. Wendy Wall's *Inventing the 'American Way': The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* offers an extended discussion on the ways in which American business and civic leaders promoted and created the idea that America was a united nation. She writes, "groups and individuals across the political spectrum warned of the Nazi tactic of 'divide and conquer' and promoted harmony and cooperation

The second promise is very similar to the first in that it relies on the notion that one can abandon one's racial and ethnic ties in order to more fully assimilate into the American mainstream. In this case, however, it suggests that through education one can fulfill the progress narrative of America – education is figured in *War Comes to America* and elsewhere as a progress narrative that eventually fulfills the promise of racial equality. In *War Comes to America*, the narrator tells us that the U.S. has the "Highest standard of living in the world" and that "We want the best for every man women and child, particularly child." Other than advanced medical care, the central focus on the idea of giving children the very best is through education. The narrator enumerates the number of schools in the U.S., saying, "They go to school, all kinds of schools." Again, the narrator shows how diverse backgrounds and schools lead to a sense of a united and educated American population. He adds, there are "25,000 high schools in the nation, and then [the children go to] college." Finally, to demonstrate the progress narrative in education, the narrator tells his audience that "In the last war 20% of soldiers had been to either high school or college, in this war, 63%." These statistics are superimposed

---

between various subgroups in U.S. society. Consensus—a consensus defined by a common enemy—came to be seen as the *sin qua non* of the 'American Way'" (104-5). The idea of American unity and consensus makes the jump from support for the war against the Axis, to the war against the Communists. Mary L. Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* picks up on the theme of American unity in regards to the image of America and American democracy abroad. She says, "Following World War II, anything that undermined the image of American democracy was seen as threatening world peace and aiding Soviet aspirations to dominate the world" (27). Her work therefore shows how the U.S. had to exhibit a dedication to civil rights and racial unity in order to keep face abroad and reduce the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda. Dudziak's work nicely brings together the themes of anticommunism and anti-racism and shows how they needed to coincide in order to present the U.S. as a unified and undivided nation. In other words, the theme of American unity, propagandized at home and abroad, was inseparable from racial equality and civil rights.

over marching soldiers, soldiers who, again, are pictured as diverse and as representative of American heterogeneity. *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* characterizes the war itself as advancing individuals into the American mainstream through education. The manual tells its audience, "[The war] is taking advantage of this unparalleled opportunity to develop, in millions of men and women, new skills which will afford them a better income and a better life in the New America we are fighting for […] skills which will make them abler and more productive members of society." Education and unity here are conjoined to suggest that by becoming educated one can participate in the progress narrative of America. Yet, education, as an "equalizer," naturalizes white mainstream values and asks the ethnic or racial subjects to assimilate these values themselves. Additionally, by attaining a better income and a better life, one can then participate in the American mainstream, but that American mainstream is still nonetheless characterized by white values and norms. There is no place in schools, in other words, for the ethnic dress that characterizes the labor of the immigrant generations – if you want to fulfill the progress narrative through education, you must give up these ties and become "American."

The third promise suggests that hard work, patriotism, and dedication to American ideal will be rewarded with not only entry into the mainstream, but all that that represents: a home, security, a family. In *War Comes to America*, the narrator says, "Let's take a look at ourselves before we entered this war. Well, first, we're a working people. We're also innovative." He then lists a myriad of American inventions and

begins his long list of American leisure activities and hobbies. The film thus connects the notion of America to hard work and suggests that having a radio in every room (and having more than one room to begin with) will be the reward for this work. One must be patriotic in order to deserve these rewards and to protect them from outside threats. *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* tells its readers that "This war, unlike any other war, is directed as much against civilians as against the armed forces. A home, like a battleship, must ready itself for action. Every person in the home must take his battle station," which ties war service to home ownership – something often promised to "fighting men" and "sacrificing women" during the war.[8] The manual more directly desires that civilians and soldiers alike see this connection when it states, "every stamp and every bond he [Bill Smith[9]] buys is an investment in America's future […] If we win the war, his money will come back to him as a nest-egg that will help build a house, buy a car, provide education for his children, or pay for travel – in a peaceful world." Here, the manual specifically asks the members of Hollywood's "Dream Factory" to promise home ownership and leisure time in exchange for war service and patriotism. Thus hard work, military service, and a belief in American ideals will directly reward an individual with the comforts and pleasures of American home life (and all of its attendant gender norms). Again, by stressing racial and ethnic equality, both these texts extend this promise to all facets of the American population,

[8] This promise was backed up by the Montgomery G.I. Bill, which aided veterans in obtaining home loans after the war and which helped spawn the tremendous growth of the suburbs in the postwar era. See my discussion of the G.I. Bill in my chapter 3.
[9] Bill Smith is a stand-in for an American male soldier (presumably white).

regardless of factors – like redlining in real estate and discrimination in employment – that might prevent racial minorities from gaining these rewards.

The final promise is one for the protection of free speech rights in a free society. *War Comes to America* mentions the presence of pro-Germany organizations in America, for example, but does not show them being persecuted. At the same time, the film tells the audience that before the U.S. ceased trading with Japan, "When we loaded our scraps on Japanese ships, our citizens protested." Both of these forms of dissent are allowed to exist and, the movie argues, are what help make the U.S. a bastion of free speech (along with the number and variety of newspapers and magazines, as mentioned above).[10] *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* also ties dissent and free speech to American values. It argues, "Sam Johnson[11] operates a drilling machine in the Smith Factory. Sam is just an average American, has a wife and two kids and a small home. Perhaps he couldn't define what is known as the American Way of Life, but he knows that his right to believe and say and do what he wants is threatened today. He knows these things are worth fighting for." Thus, presuming one is willing to subscribe to the democratic "way of life" (here characterized, as above, as home ownership and family life), then one has the right to voice one's opinions, even if they are dissenting ones. Further evidence that the manual encourages free speech and democratic debate can be found in the advice to "Vote in every election. We are fighting

[10] The film also suggests that Americas make mistakes, too, but that they work to fix them. The example that the film offers is Prohibition.
[11] Another stand-in for a (white) American male.

to preserve this right, to guarantee it to every man and woman in the world." At the same time, the manual suggests that the government is not demanding conformity or obedience, but encourages its audience to be informed. The manual reads, "The overwhelming majority of the people are behind the government in its war program but they do not have adequate knowledge and understanding of this program. In the United States we are not for 'blind followers.'" It also suggests that "Americans have an inherent respect for the dignity of the individual, for his right to live and speak and worship according to the dictates of his own conscience. Americans know who the enemy is and what he stands for. They cannot be sold a phony bill of goods, because Americans aren't suckers." These examples of healthy debate and participation in democratic government suggest that the war is there to preserve the right to free speech and expression – even when there is some opposition. At the same time, the manual and the film never suggest that it is a good idea to completely question the system,[12] but to enact change and express dissent within the structures that are in place.

The promise that wartime service or sacrifice, hard work, education, patriotism, and participation in democratic debate will provide entry into the mainstream for ethnic and racial minorities is seen in *War Comes to America*, *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, and elsewhere throughout the war and postwar period. Frank Capra himself is viewed as an example of an immigrant who came up from

[12] As Rollins points out, in *Battle for Russia*, for example, the word "Communism" is never spoken, thus avoiding the potential for a debate about the merits of either Communism or capitalism (83).

the bottom to become a success in America. In shaping the *Why We Fight* series, Capra offers proof for the claims that hard work and patriotism will be rewarded. Rollins writes, "The seven feature-length films of the *Why We Fight* series would be Capra's most important artistic contribution to his adopted country, a paean to democracy and a powerful indictment of oppression" (81).[13] Yet, despite the stated goals of the films and the manual, there are notable visual and textual slippages that point to limitations to the liberal agenda expressed in the films. For example, in *War Comes to America*, when the narrator lists the races and ethnicities that make up America, no black man is shown at the forefront of his race the way that all of the other races are represented with strong working men. This absence serves to devalue the African American contribution to the U.S. at the same time that the visual of blacks picking cotton reinscribes slavery in the modern moment. Additionally, Mexicans and Spaniards are separated into workers and explorers. This suggests that the Spanish were the original owners of the Southwest and that Mexicans are immigrants; as the imagery of toiling Mexicans suggests, they are only there to work for others (in oil fields and on ranches) and not to carve out their own place. Finally, in both the film and the manual, Japanese Americans are effaced – they play no role in the making of or in the fighting for the U.S. While Italians and Germans are praised for their contributions, the Japanese are wholly erased. As the narrator tells the history of American isolationism, he tells the audience,

[13] Other Capra films include *American Madness* (1932), *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *The Negro Soldier* (1944 – also made for the Department of War), and *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946).

"for us, Europe was far away, and as for Asia, well, that was really out of this world. Where everything looked like it was torn from the National Geographic." This reinscribes racial difference and reinforces the belief that Asians, particularly the Japanese, were unable to assimilate to white American norms.

The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry also contains within it challenges to the very message that is trying to promote. The manual notes that "America is not without its prejudices. From time to time in our history, religious hatred has flared – against Catholics, Jews and minority Protestant sects. Polish, Irish, Mexican and Chinese minorities have been persecuted." Here there is a recognition of, at the same time that there is a distancing from, the structures of white supremacy in America. The manual also advises that movies should perhaps portray realities that are not yet achieved:

> Some people may ask what the underprivileged, the uneducated, the oppressed minorities – even in this country – have to fight for. Can we not portray on the screen the fact that under the democratic process the underprivileged have become less underprivileged? For example, the Negroes have a real, a legal, and a permanent chance for improvement of their status under democracy and no chance at all under a dictatorship. We are clearing our slums, we are establishing electric lines to out-of-the-way farmers, we are abolishing vicious tenant farming, we are improving the lot of minorities.

The manual asks for the portrayal of an as-yet-unrealized progress narrative. The manual is also asking that even small gains in legal rights for blacks be portrayed in film, even as it fails to condemn the system that disallows their immediate advancement in social and legal terms. Additionally, despite asking the filmmakers to envision the gains blacks may one day make, the manual devalues their very presence in the American workforce and as able bodied and willing soldiers. In discussing the labor shortage, the manual says first that industry should tap the female reserve, and after that reserve has been tapped, then "This will be the moment for moving quickly to utilize other reserves, as well – Negroes, older workers, the handicapped, aliens and others who are and can be qualified for war jobs." Characterizing blacks as a reserve labor force equivalent to the foreign born and to the handicapped[14] distances them from American history and the American mainstream, just as *War Comes to America* anchored its images of blacks in slavery. That blacks are cast as only partially able to be employed not only devalues their labor and their contribution to the war effort, but also reifies the system of segregation that places them as last on the list for hiring.

Just as the manual mentions foreign workers, so too does it fail to mention the heavy influx of Mexicans into the United States to work in agriculture under the Bracero Program.[15] While Mexican Americans are listed as a group that has experienced discrimination, there is no push to include them in films or to present them as gaining civil rights or social leverage. The manual tells its readers, "Each instance of the

[14] See my discussion about equating disability with race in my first chapter.
[15] For more on this, see my chapter 3.

mistreatment of a citizen of foreign extraction is used to undermine the loyalty of all naturalized citizens and friendly aliens. Conversely, each instance of disloyalty on the part of an immigrant is used to arouse suspicion toward everyone of foreign birth or parentage. And so it goes." This statement does not help to establish Mexican Americans as Americans or as participants in the military and civilian war efforts. Their experience does not seem prominent to the government manual, so bent on presenting a unified image. Like African Americans, they are not characterized as soldiers. Instead, their presence, like that of the Japanese, is marked out, even as their labor is exploited. While the manual informs the filmmakers about the presence of disunity in America, it does not ask them to actually portray it in films.[16]

The manual also refers to the practice of scapegoating and argues, "The crime [of scapegoating] has been perpetrated so often that the historical record provides us with one unmistakable storm warning when human rights are in danger – a campaign against minorities. Persecution of any one group is the danger signal. If allowed to continue, it is only a question of time until the rights and liberties of everyone are lost." Here the manual is referring to Nazi and Japanese atrocities overseas, yet no mention is made of the United States' own wartime scapegoats – Japanese and Japanese Americas living on the West Coast. Like the film, the manual makes no mention of the Japanese

[16] In describing the forces of disunity in America, the manual says, "Negroes are told they are fighting a white man's war; whites are told that the negroes [sic] are disloyal. Jews are alarmed by lies about discrimination; Gentiles are told that this war was engineered by the Jews. Protestants and Jews are told that Catholics take orders from Fascist Italy." The manual also says, "Today, when the survival of our nation and our way of life is threatened from without, the enemy within seeks to inflame these latent prejudices and hatreds, to destroy our national unity and our will to resist aggression."

and characterizes them only as the enemy and never as citizens. The message of the manual is that the U.S. fails to heed its own warning in regards to campaigns against minorities.

My project takes up these slippages in the rhetoric of racial tolerance and reveals how African American, Mexican American, and Japanese American novelists in the early postwar period engage with both the promises of equality and the limitations of that promise. Critical work on the war and postwar era often considers this period a very "white" time. David Halberstam's 700-plus page bestseller, *The Fifties*, for example, does not mention a black person by name until about 400 pages in. May's *Homeward Bound* announces that "Although all groups contributed to the baby boom, it was the values of the white middle class that shaped the dominant political and economic institutions that affected all Americans" (13). Halberstam and May, among others, both chose to frame the decade in terms of white norms and white cultural representatives. Equally, many texts written in the period and about the period discuss the pervasiveness of conformity and consensus.[17] Conformity and consensus are almost wholly figured as a white phenomenon in the postwar era. With such a heavy emphasis on the tropes of consensus, there is little doubt that white Americans, at least, experienced a sense of American unity and community through conformity. Yet, there is almost no discussion in contemporary critical works of the ways that nonwhite individuals or groups

[17] Many have critiqued the promises of American democracy for being based on conformity, yet conformity was also feared in this era. As Thomas Hill Schaub puts it, "Everyone feared the insidious effects of conformity. Everyone lionized the 'individual'" (142). Conformity, after all, was seen as the basis for totalitarian systems, the systems of the enemy.

encountered the tropes of consensus or the pressures of conformity. Viewed as a solely white phenomenon, consensus is nonetheless central to discussions of the early Cold War years and the promise of American democracy.

One critical oversight prominent in scholarship covering this era is the labeling of conforming racial minorities as assimilationists and the labeling of conforming white Americans as the norm or as the suburban ideal. It is fallacy to endorse this simple binary when so much of the rhetoric of the era offers entry to ethnic and racial minorities into the American mainstream in exchange for the adoption of white norms.[18] In the political and social literature of the period, for example, the rhetoric of American unity is focused on tolerance and diversity, and this focus on diversity and tolerance therefore complicates discussions of conformity and consensus that view the decade as "white." By exploring both how public intellectuals, the government, and Hollywood film[19] articulated the concepts of diversity, equality, and tolerance and how minority fiction writers encountered, ascribed to, rejected, and challenged the concepts inherent in the trends of consensus and containment, I complicate the contemporary

[18] For more authors (both liberal and conservative) from the war and postwar era who suggest that adopting white American norms will result in mainstream acceptance, see Howard Odum, *Race and Rumors of Race: Challenge to American Crisis*; the Americans for Democratic Action's publication, *Guide to Politics 1954*; *The New American Right*, edited by Daniel Bell and Bell's *The End of Ideology*; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center*; Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*; and Peter Viereck's *Conservativism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt, 1815-1949, Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals: Babbit Jr. vs. the Rediscovery of Values*, or *The Unadjusted Man: A New Hero for Americans: Reflections on the Distinctio Between Conforming and Conserving*.

[19] Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* argues, "the American Cold War is a particularly useful example of the power of large cultural narratives to unify, codify, and contain – perhaps *intimidate* is the best word – the personal narratives of its population" (4).

constructions of the decade by questioning what has become a naturalized marriage of whiteness and consensus culture.

My project will examine the ways in which the American Dream narrative is constructed in the 1940s and 1950s and how these specific rhetorical constructions invite racial minorities to join in the optimism and in the quest for the "American Dream." The larger focus of my project, however, will be to examine how minority literatures engaged the promise of the American dream – what elements of assimilation or consensus do the writers accept? What aspects of conformity to white, American ideals do they reject or alter? How do different novelists create different pathways for their characters' entry into American mainstream? How do the characters fail? American liberalism in this era suggests that actions taken by minority individuals can advance their progress in American society and enlarge their share in American democracy. This project will point to a number of ways in which the promise of American democracy was articulated in this time period and compare and contrast these articulations with novels by African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans. In doing so, I hope, to highlight the confluences and tensions that exist between the rhetoric of the promise of American democracy and the stories told by those most directly affected by the fulfillment of those promises.

My dissertation argues that African American, Mexican American, and Japanese American authors contended with the misrepresentations of the routes to racial advancement they saw in American popular culture, domestic propaganda, and in the

output of the U.S. government. They also contended with social pressures that asked them to conform to conservative gender and family roles and to ostracize Communists, sympathizers, and agitators. This conformity was supposed to advance the fulfillment of the American dream, which suggested that ideological and social conformity, hard work, and ambition opened the door to security in the form of prosperity and a safe home life. Instead, these writers showed that the models prescribed for the advancement and integration of people of color into mainstream society – and the liberal ideals that these models rested on – were untenable even for the most promising of subjects. These works illustrate that progress was stalled by a white power structure that distinguished citizens by race but that claimed that the US was a colorblind meritocracy.

Discussions of America and Americanism in any era by any group will be fraught with tensions, conflicts, and confluences. This project pays special attention to maintaining the tensions and confluences that arise during this period in regards to the American dream. It will also pay close attention to the ways that fiction writers from diverse racial groups engage with the uneven and sometimes unmapped terrain of what it means to be accepted by one's country. The varied histories of these racial groups will provide clues as to the limits and roadblocks to success and acceptance in the early Cold War years and will offer not a corrective to the discourse of tolerance and diversity that dominated the postwar world, but an investigation into how that rhetoric affected the people it invited in.

My first chapter, “Washing White the Racial Subject: Hollywood’s First Black Problem Film,” begins examines how the liberal tolerance agenda operates in the postwar moment. I then perform a close reading of Arthur Laurents’s play *Home of the Brave* (1946) in conjunction with the 1949 film version. The play features a Jewish American G.I. who struggles with the loss of a battle buddy as well as with resentment at the discrimination he has faced in the army and on the homefront. The film version replaces the Jewish protagonist with an African American one, and in the process makes changes to dialogue, characters’ back-stories, and the characterization of the protagonist. My close reading uncovers how the black protagonist is de-sexed, emasculated, and denied agency in comparison to his Jewish counterpart. I also argue that the characterization of the black protagonist prescribes models for African American advancement. Specifically, the character is asked to divest himself of his resentment toward white America and to accept that “we’re all different.” Accepting that in their differences everyone is the “same” seemingly allows him to participate in the American success story because he can then go into business with a white army friend and supposedly have an equal chance at success. The film clearly places the onus of racial advancement on the black character and reveals that the promise of inclusion in the liberal tolerance imagination, therefore, rests on racial minorities changing their behaviors and attitudes and not on a restructuring of the systems of white supremacy.

My second chapter, “The American Institution and the Racial Subject,” continues my argument that the responsibility for social advancement is in the hands of the racial

subject and views this responsibility through the attainment of education. In this chapter I explore how the promise of education is interpreted by a mainstream Hollywood film, Elia Kazan's 1949 *Pinky*, as well as by works written by the Mexican American Américo Paredes and the Japanese American Monica Sone. Paredes, in *George Washington Gómez* (1940, 1990), and Sone, in *Nisei Daughter* (1953), interpret and critique the promise that education will lead to social advancement and acceptance. In all of these works, the attainment of education can be read as a liberal model for racial inclusion that conditions a racial subject to believe he or she can succeed by cutting his or her racial and ethnic ties and subscribing to mainstream practices, beliefs, and attitudes. Yet, as *Pinky* demonstrates, perhaps unintentionally, race is intransmutable in the eyes of mainstream America. Through education, the protagonists in these narratives become alienated from their racial communities and yet are unwelcomed in the mainstream culture they were promised in exchange. Pinky, for example, participates in a narrative of racial progress even as she is held back by segregation, racism, and the lynch law.

My third chapter, "Earning and Cultural Capital: The Work that Determines Place," continues to delineate the ways in which minority authors negotiate with the representations of racial advancement and the American dream myth. This chapter specifically focuses on the notion, found throughout the press during the war, that hard work and "bootstrapism" is ultimately rewarded with material success and security. Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946) and José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959) critique this model

by creating hard working, above-average, and ambitious protagonists who, because of their inability to move beyond the racial labor prescribed for them, fail to attain the security of the home in a prosperous and pluralistic environment that they believe is promised them. Petry challenges the ideal of the (white) male soldier and breadwinner through her representation of black female laborers. Villarreal engages the breadwinner ideal through the concept of "momism," but his protagonist ultimately rejects the white gender norms he explores. I pair these works with the 1951 film *Go for Broke!,* a film about the 442nd Nisei combat battalion in World War II. In the film, characters candidly state that they hope that their military service will change the negative opinions of Americans back home. The film then details the military acumen of the 442nd, including the rescue of the so-called "lost battalion" in Germany. Yet, this film also proves that the drive and skill of the racial subject is not rewarded with a safe and secure home life – something stripped from Japanese Americans during the internment – because six years after the last internment camp closed, the film is still unable to envision the racial subject at home in America.

My fourth and final chapter, "The Regrets of Dissent: Blacklists and the Race Question," moves from a strictly gradualist or accommodationist model of racial advancement to one in which characters directly express discontent with the options before them. Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and John Okada's *No-No Boy* (1957) explore how the promises of freedom of speech and dissent are compromised and complicated by the presence of race in America. These works also

reveal the allure of conformity and consensus culture. The U.S. government welcomed debate and dissent because it proved the freedoms and efficacy of democracy. Yet in these two works, the authors show how, while the critique may be represented as valid and acceptable, the characters who voice their dissent find that they cannot then (re)integrate into society, let alone work their way into the mainstream. The works thus highlight the hypocrisy of a nation that co-opts dissent in order to export a narrative of racial progress that is not implemented at home. I pair these works with the 1954 film *Salt of the Earth* because the film highlights the relationship between dissent, Communism, and race in this era. By virtue of being blacklisted, the film stresses the untenable nature of the union between race and dissent in an era of conformity to U.S. ideals; it thus demonstrates the limits of acceptable dissent.

Chapter 1: Washing White the Racial Subject:

Hollywood's First Black Problem Film

The Black Man Enters: The Race Problem Film in the Postwar Landscape

In 1949, four new films, *Home of the Brave*, *Pinky*, *Intruder in the Dust*, and *Lost Boundaries*, expanded the American "race problem" film genre by addressing African American and white race relations.[20] Other race problem films from the era explored racism against Jewish Americans (*Gentleman's Agreement* and *Crossfire* [both 1947]), Mexican Americans (*A Medal for Benny* [1945] and *Salt of the Earth* [1954]), Japanese Americans (*Japanese Relocation* [1943] and *Go for Broke!* [1951]), and other racial minorities in the U.S. Race problem films were viewed as a step forward by audiences in America and were part of an effort began during World War II to put blacks and other minorities in more positive roles in films. The theme of anti-racism was prevalent in the liberal postwar atmosphere and these films point to the perceived need to explain race issues to an American audience. In contrast to the black-made films celebrating African American militancy, such as Melvin van Peebles' *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) or Gordon Parks' *Shaft* (1971) of the post-Civil Rights era, these early post-World War II movies were made, predominantly, for a white audience and were meant to

[20] *Home of the Brave*, discussed at length below, is about a black soldier's battle with prejudice and the loss of a friend. *Pinky*, a central focus of my chapter 2, is about a light-skinned black nurse who passes up north, only to learn the error of her ways when she returns south. *Intruder in the Dust* is a remake of William Faulkner's novel, and concerns the exoneration of black man for murder. *Lost Boundaries*, another passing movie, is a remake of a story found in the *Negro Digest* about a family who passed in a small town, only to uncovered and finally accepted by their community.

gradually introduce the concept of racial equality and tolerance to a wider American audience; that, and make money at the box office. As Daniel Leab writes,

> There have been strong divisions of opinion about whether movies influence an audience or whether they mirror its ideas, but there can be no argument about the part that movies have played in shaping the American Dream. Almost from the beginning, the American film industry left the black out of that dream, either by ignoring him or by presenting him as an object incapable of enjoying it because of a nature that was not quite human. (2)[21]

In contrast to Leab's assessment, the race problem films from 1949 were some of the first to offer a reading of how African Americans could be part of that constructed American Dream.

These films also reflected a larger trend in the U.S. in the atmosphere following World War II. The U.S. had just fought and condemned the Nazis, was discovering the fears associated with a new kind of (cold) war with the Soviet Union, and found itself needing to defend and define its practice of democracy to third world peoples on a large scale. It did not help, therefore, that the Japanese, the Nazis and the Soviets had all attacked the U.S. for its poor record of racial tolerance and discrimination despite the U.S.'s lofty equalitarian goals and founding principles. While the U.S. State Department

[21] Michele Wallace, in a piece exploring movies from this time period, concurs with Leab's assessment. She writes, "The demands of World War II coincided with the peak of the film industry's influence in the US. The war itself had a profound impact on women's roles and on perceptions of the status of 'race' in general, and Blacks in particular. The film industry was a full participant in the dissemination of these issues" (262).

and the Office of War Information (OWI) – including the Motion Picture Bureau – could make claims to racial equality and tolerance both during and after the war, reportage of lynchings, red-lining, poll taxes, and other common forms of oppression of African Americans in the U.S. could not be silenced or fully counteracted by the U.S. propaganda machine.

The race problem films of 1949 were pro-assimilation and up-held the status quo especially in regards to segregation,[22] yet they were not the first of their kind. The "problem picture," as Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy point out in *The Hollywood Social Problem Film*, can be traced back to the depression era, where movies were made that celebrated the values of "the little guy" while condemning a host of societal forces, often conveniently represented by evil individuals or clouded in generalities. As Roffman and Purdy put it:

> The focus of the genre is very specific: the central dramatic conflict resolves [sic] around the interaction of the individual with social institutions (such as government, business, political movements, etc.). While the genre places great importance on the surface mechanism of society, there is only an indirect concern with broader social values (those of the family, sexuality, religion, etc.), the values that function behind the mechanisms. As such, the genre often seemed glib in its social analysis, viewing America as a series of social agencies that from time to time experience "problems" which must be corrected. For the

[22] See my discussion of Pinky in my chapter 2.

most part, the films attack such problems in order to inspire limited social change or reinforce the status quo. (viii)

Roffman and Purdy therefore read the problem film as made up of a set of generic conventions and formulas that vary from era to era and that can be used to work through various social issues.[23] Roffman and Purdy continue, "Hollywood expressed a great deal of concern over social inequities; it was offended by all forms of persecution, upset over widespread unemployment and fascist atrocities. But just as this concern rarely burst the tight bonds of conventional narrative in the movies, so in the political arenas of society at large it rarely extended into an all-out critique of basic American institutions" (304). Thus, Hollywood problem films, as fictions representative of American life, address only to then dispel the tensions associated with societal and cultural issues – Hollywood films are therefore closely aligned with the mainstream ideology in the U.S., even as both take their occasional stand.

When the 1949 race problem films addressed the issue of racism and racial discrimination in America, they, too, sought to solve the problems of individuals rather than larger groups, though individuals were often meant to represent larger groups or concepts. Thus, as the Roffman and Purdy formula predicts, they also failed to critique the dominant systems of racism and oppression in the U.S., even as they sought to condemn individual racists and racist practices on the interpersonal level. Accordingly,

[23] Roffman and Purdy elaborate as follows: "The Formula was based on certain elements readily recognizable to a public that had to know in general terms what to expect every week at the picture show. […] The genre film was the second most important means of categorizing and marketing a movie" (3).

systemic racism is generally not portrayed in race-problem films of the 1940s and 1950s. Race problem films present racism instead as a problem within only some institutions, from the military, to hospitals, to the justice system, and argue that racial injustices could be righted through the work of moral individuals. In this narrative, particular racist individuals corrupt otherwise just institutions, and solutions to racial problems lie in particular citizens, rather than collective revolt, civil disobedience, or violence. Distancing themselves from the mass movements of the 1930s, these films located racial problems and solutions in individuals. Part of the message of these films, then, was that being an upright citizen who believed in the inevitability of justice would help change the problems you faced, a message that avoided connotations of revolt, civil disobedience, and violence. The message in the films also mirrored the concept of African American "uplift" through the concept of model citizenship, as films suggested that it was the responsibility of the racial subject to alter the perception of whites. Progress was to be accomplished through "good behavior" and not through a radical critique of the systems of democracy or capitalism. Could the new prevalence of race as a film subject inspire new hope in achieving full citizenship status despite the past failures of this uplift model? Were there usable tactics within this model?

Unlike Disney's *The Three Caballeros* (1944), for example, the movies listed above were not made for a foreign audience and were therefore not distributed by the State Department. These movies were made for an American audience, which demonstrates how pervasive the theme of anti-racism was at the time and points to the

perceived need to explain race issues to an American audience. While my project, in the main, explores the ways in which the messages of race problem films filter into and influence novels produced in the same period by African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans, this chapter focuses on just how the messages of equality and tolerance were created for the film *Home of the Brave*. Being the first of the above films to hit theaters, *Home of the Brave* offers an entry point to understanding the ways in which the liberal message of tolerance moved from a wartime goal to a postwar promise. *Home of the Brave* is also notable because it is an adaptation of a 1946 play by Arthur Laurents, which features a Jewish American protagonist – in this way the film offers insight into how the concept of ethnic assimilation is tied to the vision of racial assimilation in the liberal imagination. Laurents worked for the OWI during the war in a film studio in Astoria, an office which complied with the standards found in *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, standards with good intention but perhaps limited vision.[24] Stanley Kramer, the director of the film version of *Home of the Brave*, also worked for the OWI in Astoria during the war, which again ties his vision of tolerance to that promoted by the U.S.

[24] Laurents, in his autobiography, writes that "During the war, it was almost impossible to tell one movie from another because they were almost all war movies with variations on one plot" (27). Laurents wrote for such series as *Armed Service Force Presents* (a radio show with an original play each week). He also wrote a play called *The Knife*: "It was about Negroes in the Army and it was honest about discrimination in the Army. But it was 1945 now; the war was coming to an end and the brass were under no illusion about the Negro's place after the war: Back to the back of the bus, boy" (29). As it turns out, however, *The Knife* was aired due to the intervention of Henry Stimson, Secretary of War (29).

government and Hollywood during the war.[25] Just as *War Comes to America* and *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, the play and the film indicate some of the shortsightedness of the vision of racial assimilation propagated in this era. As both Laurents and Kramer are Jewish, their vision of how the OWI agenda could be fulfilled in fiction is particularly relevant here. When *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* tells its film industry readers that "they" ("alien and minority groups") are fighting besides "us" (presumably those considered white), it classes the predominantly Jewish industry in with the "us," not the "they." This serves to complicate the place of Jews in America, since ostensibly being part of the white "us" doesn't fully protect them from discrimination and abuses. At the same time, because of the alterations to the play by the screenwriters, *Home of the Brave* also demonstrates the inability of the filmmakers to equate their Jewish and black protagonists and the film therefore further works to expose the limits of the Hollywood tolerance agenda.

The wartime and postwar era was one in which racial tolerance was becoming more accepted as an inevitability. While many liberal whites were gradualists and could not foresee complete social equality with racial minorities, the era is nonetheless remarkable for its endorsement of racial tolerance and legal equality. The liberal colorblind melting pot proved to be gaining traction within this moment of widespread

[25] Kramer, in his autobiography, writes, "I went to basic training for three months at Camp Crowder in Missouri, then directly to Astoria, where I worked first on the *Army and Navy Screen Magazine*, which was like a *March of Time* newsreel for the troops. Later I got into other projects, including training films" (7).

American unity. Kramer, himself, for example, writes that he "was what one might have called a Roosevelt liberal. I believed that the ills of society could be corrected within the existing system" (8). Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s* write, "During the postwar period, … for the first sustained period in U.S. history, the dominant racial theory has upheld a notion of racial equality, albeit in various versions" (5). At the same time, as Thomas Cripps, in *Making Movies Black*, writes, "the popularized work of anthropologists anticipated a wartime transformation of cultural relativism into a weapon against racism in various popular media" (37).[26] John Nickel reminds us that, "In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal wrote that persons of African descent should try to conform to the dominant white culture, for black culture, by which he meant education, family, churches, recreational activities, superstition, and crime, 'is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture'" (34). As the consensus in the U.S. would have both ethnic and racial minorities believe, the barriers to assimilation and success in the United States are "man-made" and "artificial," yet are to be overcome and challenged not by the power structure itself or those representing it, but by the individuals themselves. They are to void their histories to accept patriotic American history in place of radicalism or mass movements.

[26] The idea of racial inclusion was a very prominent one in the postwar world. As one reviewer of *Home of the Brave* at the time put it, "Once he [Moss] understands the sameness of white and black—the strong will to live—he rises from his hospital bed in a burst of energy and walks. A determined symbol, he is prepared to fight man-made artificial barriers" (Dash).

The idea that giving up one's ethnic or racial ties is an integral part of acquiring (at least access to) the American Dream is one that was shared by the right and the left. As Seymour Martin Lipset puts it in "The Sources of the 'Radical Right'" (in *The New American Right*), "The minority immigrant groups themselves have contributed to the support for conformity. One of the principle reactions of members of such groups to discrimination—to being defined as socially inferior by the majority culture—is to attempt to assimilate completely American values, reject their past, and to overidentify with Americanism" (176). This same process is expected of racial minority groups. Richard Hofstadter, in "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," (also in *The New American Right*) in discussing children of immigrants says, "An extraordinary high level of achievement is expected of them, and along with it a tremendous effort to conform and be respectable" (47). Both Hofstadter and Daniel Bell, in *The End of Ideology*, stress the notion that rights and status and power in the United States has become an open field – no longer determined by birth (Bell 45). Hofstadter notes that many first and second generation Americans are "unable to enjoy the simple luxury of assuming their own nationality as a natural event" and they cannot, therefore, "think of nationality as something that comes with birth; for them it is a matter of *choice*, and an object of striving" (48). Thus what these writers are seeing is a trend that suggests that ethnic minorities in American can chose to trade off their ethnic ties for a slice of the American pie (and if they can't do it, their children are expected to). Much of this process is

dramatized in war movies and novels (where multiple American ethnics are represented) and promoted by the Office of War Information.[27]

At the same time, many were expecting and hoping that these privileges (that were, apparently a *choice*) could and would be extended to racial minorities.[28] Howard Odum's *Race and Rumors of Race* suggests that globally there is a new understanding (resulting from a worldwide struggle for democracy) that holds out the promise of democracy to all. He says that science and technology[29] and education and religion created "a new race consciousness which would be heard. This, too, was an inevitable product of evolution and was an essential part of the American scene" (173-4). He also concludes that, "On the basis of abstract theory and in accordance with the philosophy of the American Dream there could be no refutation of the Negro's claim for his equal place in the Nation" (47). This suggests not only that African Americans deserve their rightful place in the American system, but also that the American Dream is a real process and can therefore be accomplished by both individuals and groups. At the same

[27] For a discussion of the alliance between Walter White, the OWI and Hollywood, see Cripps' "Wendell and Walter Go to Hollywood," in *Making Movies Black* and Daniel Leab's *From Sambo to Superspade*, where he writes, "If there were a few black participants in these films [war films], the industry did at least try to heed the advice of the Office of War Information to 'stress national unity' and 'show colored soldiers in crowd scenes'" (119).

[28] Not everybody, of course, was willing to make this concession. David Riesman and Nathan Glazer, in a piece titled "The Intellectuals and the Discontented Classes," which also appears in *The New American Right*, suggest that anti-Semitism and "anti-Negroism" have been exchanged for anti-intellectualism, claiming that "the Jew becomes merely one variant of the intellectual sissy—actually less important than the Eastern-educated snob!" (71). They also contend that, "the demand for tolerance of Negroes cannot replace, politically, the demand for 'economic equality': it is a very great and aggravating demand to make on children of white immigrants who are paying off the mortgage on their first suburban home" (75) – placing a priority on ethnic over racial assimilation and success.

[29] Presumably the new understanding of cultural relativism. See Omi and Winant *Racial Formation in the United States* and Thomas Cripps's *Making Movies Black*.

time, however, as will be seen in my discussion of *Home of the Brave*, Odum calls not for militant action or demands, but "for genuinely realistic education rather than revolutionary action, […] always sensing the new role of education in setting the stage for orderly change commensurate with the stated ideals of the best that men can do" (vii). Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. shares this concept of slow change in *The Vital Center* (written in the same year of the release of the race problem films), seeing that revolutionary change is never the answer. He also suggests a method for change that is very similar to the one advocated in *Home of the Brave*. He writes, "Every one of us has a direct, piercing and inescapable responsibility in our own lives on questions of racial discrimination, of political and intellectual freedom – not just to support legislative programs, but to extirpate the prejudices of bigotry in our environment, and, above all, in ourselves" (252). Schlesinger suggests that individuals must overcome racial prejudice, while the structures of white supremacy remain the same or only very gradually are changed. Racial minorities are expected to disengage themselves from any revolutionary or militant impulses that connect them to African American history, and to exchange these for mainstream ways of thinking and modes of patriotism that connect them to a more generalized American history.

How this process of acculturation worked for American Jews was being discussed in this period in the pages of *Commentary* and *Partisan Review*. Understanding how Jewish Americans saw this process is important because of their prominent position in both American foreign policy (after a war against Nazis and with the establishment of Israel),

in the creation of culture in Hollywood, and civil rights. As Floren Murray writes in *People's Voice*, "Especially outstanding has been the alliance of Jews and Negroes, each of which group has come to the rescue of the other in the various struggles against discrimination and exploitation" (16). At the same time, the discussions about acculturation and assimilation reflect the fears of radicalism that are evident in the liberal tolerance agenda – even as writers in these journals often express a dis-ease with the simple assimilation/acculturation that suggested that Jews and other European immigrants (and sometimes blacks and other racial minorities) could all follow the same paths to acculturation, the writers often nonetheless ascribe to the process. Oscar Handlin, in "Group Life Within the American Pattern: Its Scope and Its Limits," compares the acculturation of Jews to Italians and Quakers with the suggestion that tolerance will eventually be achieved. He writes that "the social experience of the Jews in America has run the same essential course as that of other ethnic groups; the development of religion, of fraternal, charitable, and cultural life, even of nationalistic movements, demonstrates that" (417), and adds, "In the future, identification with the ethnic groups, even in the case of the Negroes, is far more likely to be voluntary, to represent the conscious recognition of the strength of some cultural ties" (416). [30] Thus, Handlin suggests that all "ethnic" and "racial" groups can overcome limitations in America, and

[30] Handlin, in "New Paths in American Jewish History: Afterthoughts on a Conference," expresses some hesitancy about the idea of a homogenous society. He writes, "All newcomers, eager to establish a sense of belonging, have been more anxious to forget than to remember the past out of which they have risen and which they imagine has separated them from the whole community" (389). Also in this article he suggests that "It was asserted, for instance, that the trend in many congregations away from Orthodoxy to Conservatism was related to the social mobility and to the Americanization of their members" (392).

that it is all a matter of voluntary choice.[31] Robert Pick also sees the same trend, when he suggests that any newcomer "whether successful or a failure, prosperous or still living in precarious circumstances, educated or not" hopes "to shed his minority status, to belong" (211). At the same time, a writer like David Riesman recognizes that in the melting pot ideology of the American system, "The main burden was on the minorities, while few demands were made by the ethical system of the Protestant majority" (416). There is a discomfort with the conformity that assimilation asks for at the same time that there is an embrace of the American Dream and the possibilities it holds out to ethnic and racial minorities.

In these journals there is also a lot of anxiety over assimilating to the point of denying Jewishness. Riesman discusses those who deny Jewishness – either as a "liberal" reaction to the idea of racelessness or as a "radical" who would rather fight for all of the oppressed (419). He concludes, "In this way, the specifically Jewish overtones are lost; but indeed this is precisely what the self-denier wants" (419). In Sydney Hook's article, "Reflections on the Jewish Question," he writes, "It is pathetic to observe how many Jews seek to pin on other Jews, those who differ in some perceptible manner from themselves, the blame for a discrimination whose explanation lies not in them,

[31] He does, however, try to make a specific distinction in regards to African Americans. He writes, "The absence of a full institutional life among ethnic groups not free to develop their own associations seriously impeded their adjustment. The Negroes were distinctive in this respect. The relics of their slave status, combined with the romantic assumption of the abolitionists that there were no real differences between the Negroes and other Americans, long deprived this group of the opportunity to build a life of its own. The failure to distinguish between uniformity and equality left it with a truncated social experience. The Negroes confronted an unreal alternative between complete segregation, on the one hand, and participation, usually at an inferior status, in 'white' activities" ("Group Life," 415-6)

save in the tautologous sense that if there were no Jews there would be no antisemitism [sic], but in the beliefs and habits and culture of the non-Jews" (468). These arguments challenge the idea of the uplift model, so often applied to ethnic and racial assimilation in America. Hook, on the other hand, also argues that there are no specifically definable Jewish characteristics except for either calling oneself Jewish or being called so by others. He writes, "Let any Catholic Irishman or Boston Brahmin or Southern aristocrat move into a community in which he is unknown and pretend he is Jewish only to the extent of *saying* he is Jewish, and he will be treated like all other Jews including those who do not *say* they are Jewish but whom the Gentile community regards as Jews" (475).[32] Thus, Jews, according to Hook, are unmarked and can therefore just as much be imitated by gentiles as they can (presumably) imitate them.[33] These essays, in the main, advocate the idea that there is little difference between Jews and whites, but that Jewish history and community should be maintained.

The pages of these journals do not offer a racist picture or even propagate the status quo in regards to race and ethnic equality, and often the question of discrimination against African Americans and other racial minorities is as prominent as

---

[32] Hook further suggests that Jewish people are unmarked in the following assessment: "What is true for religion is true for any other trait of differentiation—physical appearance, psychology, culture, language, political faith. Take any trait 'x' or combination of traits, 'x^s' which is presented as *the* mark of Jewishness. Classify all those who are regarded or who regard themselves as Jews, East or West, North or South, in an order ranging from those who manifest the least amount of x, or x^s, to those who display the most. It will then be found that the difference between Jews who possess the least and the most amount of x, or x^s, is greater than the difference between most Jews and most non-Jews in respect to this trait. This is clearly so in the United States …" (474).

[33] As Robert Pick puts it, "They adopt a non-Jewish-sounding family name, or even join a Protestant church" (212).

the question of anti-Semitism.[34] Yet, we also see that there is a notable distinction being made, at times, between racial and ethnic minorities – the same sentiments that are expressed in Kramer's adaptation of *Home of the Brave*. While these journals are not univocal in their perspective on Jewish American assimilation/acculturation, they are nearly so with regards to their celebration of American values (especially over totalitarian ones), and with a predominantly conservative (even as it is liberal) view of racial and religious tolerance.[35] For example, when *Partisan Review* held a symposium titled "Our Country and Our Culture" in 1952, one of the central questions asked respondents why more and more intellectuals were accepting and embracing Americanism.[36] The answers to this question reflect a strong pro-American sentiment. William Phillips, to offer one example, writes, "with the threat of Soviet totalitarianism and with the exhaustion and political confusion of Europe, American artists and intellectuals have acquired a new sense of belonging to their native land, and generally have come to feel that their own fate is tied to the fate of their country" (586). F. G.

---

[34] As Rogin puts it, "Just as immigrant Jews were helping to produce a racialized twentieth-century mass culture in the United States, they also led the fight for civil rights" (16). The journals offer articles on discrimination in housing, in the state university system in New York, in segregated D.C., and in the failure to enact the recommendations of Truman's Civil Rights Committee. Rogin also points out: "in 1949—it would surprise a later generation to realize—militant blacks were more at home in *Commentary* than in the NAACP, for the American Jewish Committee-sponsored journal challenged the integrationist optimism that imprisoned *Crisis*. Rooted in the American Jewish past, however, *Commentary's* radicalism was temporary; through its vicissitudes one can see the forces that would, from the Jewish side, bring the civil rights period to an end" (257).

[35] Rogin tells us "As the 1950s wore on, *Commentary* and *Partisan Review* worried less about racial injustice than about what they saw as Communist and populist assaults on democratic leadership" (262).

[36] The editors predicated the question as follows: "Whatever the cultural consequences may be, the democratic values which America either embodies or promises are desirable in purely human terms. We are certain that these values are necessary conditions for civilization and represent the only immediate alternative as long as Russian totalitarianism threatens world domination" ("Our Country" 285).

Friedmann, in "America: A Country Without Pre-History," writes, "For the American, freedom in the active sense is predicated, instead, on his faith in the superability of all limits. These limits are the problems, the obstacles of practical life; his freedom therefore consists in progressively solving his various problems" (149). Individuals writing about equality and tolerance in the late 1940s and early 1950s do so in a way that highlights the values of American society in an especially Cold War fashion – while the U.S. may need to finally fulfill the promise of equality, it is frequently noted that the system in the U.S. is far better than that in the Soviet Union.[37] At the same time that U.S. democracy is praised for being capable of racial equality, we see that individuals are often assigned responsibility for changing their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. The race question was so hard to navigate because critique had to be balanced with an acceptance of the system in place.[38] Therefore, as many of the above pieces on the Jewish question suggests, conservativism was a necessary element of discussions of racial tolerance and equality.

Much of the pro-tolerance or pro-equality sentiments in the 1940s and 1950s, though dominant (but not ubiquitous) across the political spectrum, were inherently conservative in nature. Many asked that equality be limited to legal equality, and not

[37] Hook writes, "He [the democrat] no more wants to destroy the individual Jew than the individual Gentile. He wants only to destroy those individuals and social institutions which seek to deprive human beings of their power of uncoerced choice" (482).
[38] Many of the people who worked on *Home of the Brave* and other 1949 race problem films were soon blacklisted. As David and Adele Bernstein put it in *Commentary*, "So, today, it is perfectly safe to express the narrowest reactionary opinion in Washington, even to the point of un-Americanism from the Right. But it is by no means safe to talk freely in favor of civil rights, for example, unless you are sure everyone else in the room is friendly" (402).

extend to social equality. Many also wanted gradual change that would not disrupt the status quo.[39] At the same time, this conservativism (even in its liberalism) was reflected in other aspects of American life in the Cold War – gender roles, anti-Communism in the U.S., and the Cold War abroad, just to name a few. Indeed, the very notion of racial equality was tied, in many minds, to the Communist threat – either that racial intolerance in the U.S. would paint a bad picture of the U.S. globally, or that drives for racial equality were the work of Communist infiltration. The 1949 race problem films were also conservative in nature. Nickel suggests of the genre, "Reinvigorating the myth of the American hero, the white protagonists in these movies buck conformity, uphold democratic ideals, and aid victims. In this case, however, the victims are not damsels in distress but debilitated, defenseless, emasculated, and, for all practical purposes, feminized black men" (39). Thus, as he and others point out, one major audience for these films are whites who could assuage guilt by watching one of their own save the life of a racial other. The *Chicago Defender* reports Kramer as saying, "'Those who saw the play will find in the picture the deadly parallel,' he said. 'They will see, too, a demonstration of the way in which only democracy can meet and conquer such problems. It will pull no punches" ("Start Screening" 16). Thus, as in *America Comes to War* or in the OWI guidelines for moviemakers, many in this time period saw democracy as the only opportunity for equality – even when that process is flawed or delayed,

[39] See Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center*, Peter Viereck's *The Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, and Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* for examples of works from the time period that promote gradualism in regards to racial integration and tolerance. For a discussion on the goals of legal vs. social equality, see Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* (150-1, and 252).

there was, for the most part, no better option according to intellectuals, movie men, politicians, and so on. In order to make an objection to or a rejection of American practice, one had to accept the system and its ability to offer liberties to all (and the critique itself was considered an example of this liberty).

Because these race problem films were imaginative visions of how America could live up to its promises and solve race problems, the limits that the films themselves imposed on the ability of their characters to achieve success in the white world reveals the inability for the filmmakers to envision racial tolerance within the model offered by U.S. government and Hollywood. Despite these failings, the films also codify, I argue, a set of promises to racial minorities. The promises are contingent on an "if, then" scenario, where if the racial minorities ascribe to the values and behaviors of the mainstream, then they will be accepted. But, I argue, as the films show, being "accepted" or "making it" is difficult for the filmmakers to envision and thus the promises of the liberal tolerance agenda are left unfulfilled, always deferred. The limits to the Hollywood tolerance vision are limits that have real implications in the lives of racial minorities in America, and that are also tested and negotiated with by the authors I cover in my later chapters.

Saved by a Cripple: Envisioning the Liberal Tolerance Agenda

The first of the race problem films of 1949 to be released was Stanley Kramer's *Home of the Brave*. Adapted from Arthur Laurents's 1946 Broadway play of the same name, the film version of *Home of the Brave* substituted a black American protagonist

for the play's Jewish American lead. While many of the reviewers of the time claimed there was little difference between the two versions (other than the racial make-up of the lead character), the play and film offer distinct offer distinct perspectives on access to rights, community support, sanctioned dissent, and assimilation between Jewish Americans and African Americans. Their differences also highlight the limits to the liberal message that the film advances. The liberal message that structures the film is thus limited by its own blind spots. That these two American subgroups could be interchangeable in a narrative concerning racial tolerance exposes the gap between rhetorical intention (blacks and Jews can achieve the same level of acceptance and endure similar trials to get there) and the realities of the American racial landscape (blacks and Jews cannot possibly be shown to occupy the same social, civic, or cultural roles). Kramer's switch from a Jewish to a black American protagonist aligns with the dominant idea that ethnic models of assimilation or acculturation could be applied to all racial minorities. Yet, aspects of his film simultaneously demonstrate that blacks were in fact not invited to assimilate in the same way that Jews were.[40]

[40] The idea that black and Jewish assimilation (or, achievement of the promises of American democracy) were interchangeable corroborates Michael Omi and Howard Winant's argument in *Racial Formation in the United States*, which suggests that the dominant theory about race in the post World War II moment in the U.S. relied on what they call the "ethnicity theory" of race relations. This theory operates along the lines of "the European immigrant analogy, which suggested that racial minorities could be incorporated into American life in the same way that white ethnic groups had been, and the assumption of a fundamental, underlying American commitment to equality and social justice for racial minorities" (12). They also explain that "Ethnicity theory emerged in the 1920s as a challenge to then-predominant biologistic and social Darwinist conceptions of race. Securing predominance by World War II, it shaped academic thinking about race, guided public policy issues, and influenced popular 'racial ideology' well into the mid-1960s" (12).

In *Home of the Brave*, the play and the movie, five soldiers embark on a dangerous mission in the Pacific theater where they must map unknown terrain in preparation for a second mission (both missions are successful because of their work). Moss (James Edwards) –named Coney in the play – becomes paralyzed during the mission, and the story is told through flashbacks during his psychiatric evaluation to determine the root cause(s) of his paralysis.[41] We learn that his paralysis is due to the guilt he felt when he saw his friend Finch die and due to built up resentments stemming from the racial prejudice he has endured at home and in the army.[42] The film explores the personal relationships of the five men and shows how prejudice affects the black protagonist as well as the white men on the mission. They all have something to learn. In the film, Mingo (Frank Lovejoy), a quiet and tough but big-hearted man, needs to overcome the loss of his arm and a wife that left him. In regards to race he is tough-minded and honest, saying, "Look, I've got no more use for a bad black man than I have for a bad white man."[43] The Major (Douglas Dick), a rule-governed man who is sometimes insecure about giving orders, needs to overcome feelings of incompetence due to his young age. His prejudice is expressed early on, but then is overcome. He tells Mingo, "It's funny, ever since we got on this island I never think of him as being black." T.J. Everett (Steve Brodie), an older corporal whose age and economic success before

[41] In the movie, the flashback sequence where the men find out about the mission stems from the Major, he is telling the Doctor about the day in question. In the play, Coney is responsible for the point of view in the flashback.
[42] The film finally lands on guilt over feeling glad he wasn't shot when his friend was, thereby "evading" – in Ralph Ellison's reading of the film (278) – the reality of resentment toward oppression and discrimination.
[43] All quotes from the film are from my own transcription.

the war affect his ability to adjust to army life, needs to overcome the insecurity responsible for his class issues and racism. He is portrayed as the most vicious of the racist in the story. Moss, as the main focus of the narrative, appears at first to be a good natured and loyal soldier, but is quickly shown to be reactive to racial slurs, which thus characterizes him immediately as, according to the logic of the movie, too sensitive to these insults.[44] After he becomes paralyzed, the doctor encourages him to get over the "severe traumatic shock" brought on by Finch's death by realizing that he's "just like everyone else." Finch is a friendly and amiable character who doesn't seem to understand the realities of racism in America and is sometimes naïve about his friendship with Moss.[45] Much of the dialogue, scene directions and set up are the same in both the play and the movie. Yet, there are key divergences that point to the irredeemable difference between Jews and blacks in America in the late 1940s. The film attempts to erase differences between black and Jew (and white), but a close reading of the alterations of the stage play demonstrate the limits of the liberal tolerance agenda.

The film received excellent reviews upon its release.[46] In *Women's Wear Daily*, Thomas R. Dash says, "'Home of the Brave,' which started unreeling at the Victoria

---

[44] Coney, Moss's Jewish counterpart in the play version, occupies a very different subject position than Moss. These will be discussed in detail below.

[45] In the play, Finch comes off as a bit less naïve and more optimistic, since befriending and going into business with a Jew was far more common and accepted than doing the same with a black man at this time. At the same time, Finch does not have to grow out of his naiveté or optimism, since he dies. Optimism and naiveté, according to Schlesinger and others, were signs of the weakness of the depression era thinking and, in their opinion, opened the door to Communism and other leftist thought. See Schlesinger 40-1 for the weaknesses of "Doughface optimism."

[46] *Home of the Brave* also won numerous awards, including from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States Department of California, The Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith, the Los Angeles Urban League, the Christian Herald in association with the Protestant

Theatre today, is an adult, fearless, and challenging study of race bias." Samuel Grafton says, "I urge you by all means to see 'Home of the Brave.'" The *Hollywood Reporter* says "Socially 'Home of the Brave' may be expected to exert a profound influence; it is a compelling and fascinating plea for tolerance" ("Brave"). Walter White, in "Courageous New Picture," says of the film, "'Home of the Brave,' the first of at least eight Hollywood films which break with the traditional treatment of the Negro as menial or buffoon, sets a pace of dramatic treatment and honesty which its successors will find trouble in matching. It has some faults. But those shortcomings are relatively minor in comparison with a brand new pattern of picturization of Negro-White relations which 'Home of the Brave' establishes." Meredith Johns, in the *Chicago Defender*, says of the film, "'Home of the Brave,' which had private screening here this week, comes closer to the true story of the Negro-white problem as developed in this country than anything yet made in Hollywood" (16). Lillian Scott, also of the *Chicago Defender,* writes, "Having produced the most outstanding and honest motion picture on Negro-white relations in history, Stanley Kramer awaits the response of national audiences" (16).

Interestingly, however, in the change of protagonist from Coney to Moss, most reviewers saw the same story being told. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* writes:

> In Mr. Laurents' stage play, the central character was a Jew – a Jewish soldier who went to pieces on a South Pacific island because of ingrained resentments

---

Motion Picture Council, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Urban League of Greater New York, *Parents' Magazine*, and *Photoplay* magazine (awards found in the Stanley Kramer Collection at the Special Collections Library at UCLA).

> and emotional shock. But here the scriptwriter, Carl Foreman, has changed the character to a Negro without altering the basic resentments or conflicts suffered by the man – which, appropriately enough, is precisely the moral which the film would illustrate. (29)

Richard L. Coe of *The Washington Post* notes, "Carl Foreman's screen play is adapted from a stage drama of the same name by Arthur Laurents, whose original, flashbacks and medical uses, has been carefully followed, except that the hero was a Jew, not a Negro" (24). Dash writes in *Women's Wear Daily*, "In the change of races, no egregious violence has been done to the eternal verities of human emotion. The dynamics of hatred are of a universal mould. Those that persecute the singular, the minority, the easy scapegoat, do not discriminate as between one victim and another." Florabel Muir in *Variety* states, "As in the stage play, it watches five men on a scouting mission to a Jap-held island; and the one of the number who is Jewish in the play has become a Negro on the screen … Except for the change mentioned above, the picture is a close approximation of Laurents's stage blueprint." Finally, John Masa Brown in *The Saturday Review* says, "When 'Home of the Brave' was seen as a play on Broadway three seasons back, its central figure was a Jew. Now he is a Negro. And the story, though otherwise unaltered, is strengthened by the change." While some of these reviews highlight a duplication of *sentiment* between the stage and the film versions, others specifically claim that no other changes were made between the play and movie.

Kramer himself continues the myth that very little changed. Meredith Johns of the *Chicago Defender* tells us, "'Actually,' Kramer stated, 'the theme of "Home of the Brave" remained unchanged, for the basic conflict was the same" (7). In his memoirs from late 1990s, Kramer claims, "Our only significant change was the one I had anticipated when I saw the play. We made the hero a black solider in an all-white company. Even though I knew how unlikely such 'race mixing' would be in World War II, since army integration didn't begin until after the war, I figured I might be forgiven for jumping the gun by three or four years" (35). In fact, as Rogin points out, Kramer's movie came out a year after Truman's Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the army (232). In his memoirs Laurents writes, "The film version of *Home of the Brave* was highly acclaimed and was a commercial hit. Not a critic, not a vocal soul was bothered that there were no racially integrated units in the Army like the one in the picture. It was a movie" (51). While Kramer admits his fudging of reality with the use of an "integrated" unit in the film, he nonetheless relies on the concept of his own bravery in using a black lead as well as denies the very real differences between the black and Jewish characters as envisioned by the film and the play.

Kramer's longer explanation of the changes made to the play treats facilely what, as I will soon show, are major changes in plot and structure from the play to the movie that are solely motivated by race. Kramer writes,

> I consulted with Foreman every day on the screenplay. He eliminated sections of dialogue that were too talky and detailed because things we could convey with

> pictures in a film had to be explained verbally on the stage. And he added flashback scenes to illuminate the civilian backgrounds of the principal characters. Aside from those changes, we simply filmed our variant of the stage version, and I didn't know until later why it had been so easy: Laurents had written the play originally with a black hero. (36)

Laurents denies the claim that he originally conceived of the protagonist as black; in personal email correspondence with the author, he writes, "*Home of the Brave* always had a Jew as its central character. How do I know? I wrote it." Kramer's insistence on the "naturalness" of the change to a black lead is continued in his discussion of the film. While the "too talky" scenes were eliminated, according to Kramer, the "dramatic effect" was heightened: "Altogether, the switch to a black man improved the story, not only in a dramatic but in a mechanical sense, because when the hero is Jewish, there is no apparent difference between him and the other characters. When he is black, the difference appears immediately, thus heightening the drama from the opening moment" (40).[47] Also, consider Kramer's statement to Lillian Scott of the *Chicago Defender*: "I edited it, but I began to lose perspective. Originally, the play dealt with a neurotic Jew and the question always is to anybody, how the hell different are you anyway? But using a dark colored boy who was physically different in front of a mass

[47] One reviewer in *Commentary* somewhat erroneously reports, "Where the Jews in *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement* could just as easily have been Eskimos, the Negro in *Home of the Brave* is fortunately an unmistakable Negro. Moss talks like a Negro, looks like one, and is plagued by problems that only a Negro experiences" (181). Richard Clurman, the reviewer, does not seem aware that the film is a re-make of the play.

audience gave us a chance to say, dramatically this should hold water" (16). Here, Kramer performs what Rogin argues is a central aspect of Jews in popular culture in America: he is using "a dark colored boy" (what Rogin reads as a minstrel character, see below) to emphasize the sameness of Jews to whites – "how the hell different are you anyway?" Here Kramer unproblematically equates Jews and blacks in order to highlight the sameness of Jews to whites, while ostensibly working toward racial tolerance.[48] Rogin's argument, as apparent in Kramer's comments, coincides with the thinking of public intellectuals and politicians at this time who were using ethnic models of assimilation or acculturation to understand, explain, and encourage the process of cultural assimilation in regards to racial minorities. Using ethnic assimilation models suggests that racial individuals have a choice to become "more American," and that this choice is "voluntary," as Oscar Handlin suggested in *Commentary*. Because it is envisioned as a choice, however, then one could suggest that when a racial minority is the object of oppression and racism, then it is because of their own failure to emulate or choose whiteness. But Kramer's own statements about his protagonist counteract the possibility for choice, since blackness becomes indelible in his eyes.

Current critical discussions of *Home of the Brave* vary in focus. When Thomas Cripps asks why the Jewish protagonist was changed to an African American, he looks into the relationship between writer and director to understand the movie's message. He writes, "The script thus negotiated the rapids between the 'blatant propaganda'

[48] For further reading see Rogin's discussion of *Home of the Brave* in *Blackface, White Noise.*

favored by Foreman and Kramer's standing wish for a Hollywood ending—the classic Hollywood hedge against alienating the audience from its wish for the familiar" (222). Bogle's discussion of *Home of the Brave* does not touch on the differences between the stage play and the screenplay either. He writes, "As a successful Broadway play, Arthur Laurents' *Home of the Brave* had had an anti-Semitic theme. Its hero was a young Jewish soldier. Producer Kramer shrewdly substituted a Negro character for the Jewish protagonist" (144). At the same time, Bogle and others see the movie as part of the liberal consensus after the war. Bogle writes:

> And so finally by 1949, the audience expectations and demands, their quirks, their insecurities, and their guilt feelings created more surely than anything else a cycle of penetrating motion pictures that investigated the race problem in America. The Negroes of the films had their color stamped indelibly upon them, and they suffered, struggled, bled, yet endured. But as Hollywood had it, they always won their battles" (143).

Home of the Brave and other race problem films are thus seen as an outgrowth of the recognition by the American people that it was now time to fight racism (or at least vocalize disagreement with it) on a national (Hollywood) scale, partly due to the experiences of war and partly due to the new Cold War. At the same time, as Bogle points out, Hollywood often missed the mark in trying to portray African Americans and often continued the stereotypes they were trying to dispel.

John Nickel also writes about *Home of the Brave* in a way that highlights the disabling and emasculating tendencies in this and other race problem films. He writes, "An uncanny feature of many race message movies, including *Home of the Brave*, is that African American men are either presented as disabled or equated with disabled white Americans" (26). Thus, in the end of *Home of the Brave*, when the one-armed Mingo and the emotionally scarred Moss become friends and business partners, Nickel and others aptly read it as putting black and white on equal footing only when the white man is disabled.[49] Nickel also sees this weakness as part of what helps the white audience see themselves as heroes.[50] He writes, "Weak, passive, dependent, vulnerable, persecuted, humble, and innocent, the black disabled figure hit just the right note—sympathetic and not too threatening—for contemporary white moviegoers" (32). He adds, "Blackness, as *Home of the Brave* shows, was considered a disability in the postwar years, something that had to be coped with and, if possible, overcome. According to white liberal orthodoxy, African Americans could not do this alone. To solve what was often called 'the Negro Problem,' white Americans would have to nurse the black patient" (36). Rogin's reading of *Home of the Brave* also focuses on the idea of the feminized and dependent black man.

[49] Rogin, in "Democracy and Burnt Cork," similarly suggests, "Tying Moss to the disabled veteran, the movie intends to dissolve the stigmas attaching to racial difference and amputation, but in proclaiming that two damaged men could make a postwar life together, the movie was allying the black man with the cripple" (24).

[50] Nickel references James Baldwin's use of the phrase "missionary complex" in describing whites working toward civil rights (36).

Michael Rogin's discussion of *Home of the Brave* in *Blackface, White Noise* connects the film to the tradition of blackface in America. Rogin argues that blackface minstrelsy Americanized the immigrants who performed it. This tradition, stemming from vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley made its transition into film as well, with *The Jazz Singer* (1927) as its most prominent signifier. He writes, "Motion picture blackface, I propose, inherited the function of its predecessor: by joining structural domination to cultural desire, it turned Europeans into Americans" (12). Thus, while *Home of the Brave* does not feature a blackface performer, Rogin nonetheless sees elements of this tradition. He writes, "Blackface no longer negotiated immigrant rites of passage; that function of the form would move, as we shall see, to the race-problem film" (190). Rogin's adept reading of the film places the doctor in the role of blackface performer and Moss in the role of mammy. Thus, the doctor, who, Rogin argues, Kramer made Jewish by "giving him a Jewish nose and appearance, [and] photographing him from angles and in close-ups that emphasized his facial look" (231), becomes the performer and Moss, as feminized and dependent, becomes the mammy being performed. As Rogin puts it: "In forcing words and tears from the black face, the Jewish doctor, imitating the jazz singer before him, is effectively putting on blackface. He is making the black face and body perform emotions forbidden to his (male, Jewish) self" (235). Thus, as he does for *The Jazz Singer* and other early blackface films, Rogin sees *Home of the Brave* as moving Jews, but not African Americans, closer to assimilation/acculturation. He also writes, "Retaining black difference, *Home* creates an African American man who

nurtures and forgives whites. The repressed social position of blacks in the Jim Crow army, who were largely confined to supply, medical aid, and cleanup tasks, returns in the black-man-as-mammy" (247). Thus, Rogin's reading, like Nickel's, sees Moss as feminized and emasculated, while simultaneously devoid of a cultural history. These readings account for some of the major themes and shortcomings of *Home of the Brave* and yet they do not fully account for the differences between the play and the film. Not that alterations of a script are always fundamental in reading film or literature, but in this case, where the ethnicity/race of the character is changed,[51] it becomes of vital importance to understanding the limitations of the positive message that the filmmakers were trying to convey.[52]

By replacing a Jewish American protagonist with an African American one, Kramer and Foreman hoped not only to make a good return at the box office[53] but also

---

[51] As Davita Bloom points out, "The casting decision in the 1947 film *Crossfire* is another example worth noting. This movie was based on Richard Brooks' novel *The Brick Foxhole*. According to the film's director Edward Dmytryk, 'the book had a number of subplots, one of which concerned the murder of a homosexual by a sadistic bigot.' In the film version the murder victim was changed to a heterosexual Jew, and homophobia was replaced with anti-Semitism, effectively erasing homophobia as an issue worthy of film representation at that time. This casting decision, along with the decision in *Home of the Brave*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, serves to declare one form of discrimination as worthy of cultural representation over another" (14). Rogin's reading is slightly different: "*Crossfire* had replaced the murdered homosexual of the book from which the movie was made with a vaguely effeminate Jew. *Home*, completing the circle, turned its Jew into an African American homoerotically bonded with a white" (241).

[52] Rogin does, however, discuss a major difference between the play and movie: "*Home*'s final scene was meant to be redemptive, creating a new community out of the breakdown of racial barriers following the loss of the old. Melodrama more convincingly restores lost innocence than makes something new, however, a difficulty underlined by the historical obstacle in 1949 to Moss and Mingo's interracial community. A solution plausible in the play, given Jewish assimilation, discredited the movie, which replaced the Jew with the African American" (247). My reading of the difference, I hope, provides a larger understanding of the change of protagonist.

[53] The movie was filmed in just over 2 weeks and came out ahead of the other race problem films scheduled to be released in 1949. *Home of the Brave* was "among the top thirty grosser of the year," while *Pinky* was second in box office returns for 1949 (Rogin 169).

to move on from a theme that "had been done." Kramer writes in his memoirs, "while I shared this experience of prejudice with the play's Jewish soldier, anti-Semitism had already been treated in American film" (35).[54] Many reviewers at the time repeated the notion that films concerning anti-Semitism, specifically *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) and *Crossfire* (1947), had "been done." A 1949 issue of *Monthly Film Review* suggests, "This play has now been adapted to the screen, with the timely substitution of a negro [sic] for the Jew. (The *Crossfire—Gentleman's Agreement* cycle is now passed, and the negro [sic] problem occupies 'advanced' film-makers in Hollywood—there are more films to come on this subject)" (G.L. 193). Laurents writes in his memoir, **"**When I asked why [the Jewish protagonist had been changed to a black], Stanley [Kramer] replied: 'Jews have been done.' He was referring to the movie *Gentleman's Agreement*, in which Gregory Peck played a gentile (no stretch) pretending to be a Jew (only in the movies). The picture's moral was Be nice to a Jew because he might turn out to be a gentile" (50-1).[55] Thus, while even though, as Laurents's remarks about *Gentleman's Agreement* imply, anti-Semitism and white/Jewish relations were still tense and mitigated by prejudice, there is the suggestion, at the same time, that since the "Jewish question" had been "done," anti-Semitism was "done" too. But, as Michael Rogin puts it, "However vicious, American anti-Semitism was not the racism that organized society"

[54] It may be important also to note that "of the major powers in the Big Eight Hollywood studios that dominated the industry from the 1920s through the 1940s, only Cecil B. DeMille and Darryl Zanuck were not immigrant Jews" (Rogin 78).

[55] For how this applies to Jeanne Crain (a white actress) playing the light-skinned black role in *Pinky*, see my chapter 2.

(228).[56] In the postwar moment, Americans were considered the liberators of Jews, a Jewish state was being organized in Israel, and Jews were continuing to become racially white (while, at times and in certain venues, still considered ethnically different). Thus, as the Italians, Irish and other European ethnics gained full status as whites through war service and its attendant intermixing of peoples from different parts of the United States, so too were Jewish Americans moving toward the full benefits of whiteness.[57]

By saying that anti-Semitism was "done" or "had been done," reviewers were suggesting that the message of anti-Semitism was already out there, had been successful at that box office, and it was time for something hotter. At the same time, there is the unconscious suggestion, or perhaps the hope, expressed by reviewers and by Kramer himself that Jewish American assimilation or integration was a given. These statements suggest that the movies, the American audience, and society could "do" African American integration as well. While a naïve and facile view of race relations in America, it was both a time and a movie that were nonetheless hopeful and optimistic about its message and its chances. Kramer expresses this hopefulness in his memoirs: "This [putting a black man in a lead role] was one of several ways in which *Home of the*

---

[56] Robert Pick, writing in 1948, suggests a more subtle distinction of prejudice against Jews in America. He writes, "Imagine the relief, therefore, when the refugee observed that political anti-Semitism is not considered respectable in America. He noticed it in the total lack of anti-Semitism on the part of the government and in its absence from the platforms of the two great parties" (208). But he adds, "However, at the same time that he made this important discovery [no institutionally sanctioned anti-Semitism], the refugee was confronted with a less agreeable feature of American life: social discrimination" (208).

[57] Consider, for example, the ethnic Americans represented in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) – there is a range of ethnic Americans, and even a Japanese American, but no blacks – and how, in his novel at least, war service brings people of different backgrounds together as Americans.

Brave broke new ground. Not only was a black man portrayed as the equal of whites, but he was shown, in his fears and aspirations, to be altogether similar to a white man" (40). Again, this shows a lofty and forward-looking goal for a film of its time period. The race problems films of 1949 developed out of a wartime push to make movies that presented black characters in dignified roles (or, as Walter White put it, "to broaden the roles in which Negroes are pictured" (Cripps 44)). This push was led by the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Bureau of Motion Pictures, Roosevelt's *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, the NAACP led by Walter White and his Hollywood Bureau, and filmmakers themselves (many of whom, like Kramer, had served the OWI during the war). Cripps calls this part of an "organic coalition of moviemen, the NAACP, and the OWI, in a shared hegemony over the formerly lilywhite manufacturing of movies" (26). While film history proves that this wartime alliance was not wholly successful in changing Hollywood practice, Cripps suggests that "At the least, however, White, the OWI, and Hollywood, thrust together by the circumstance of war, had drawn the attention of their constituencies to a fresh way of viewing African Americans on the screen and had offered a standard of 'progress' that, while hardly contractual, provided a measure of the studios' conduct" (62). This wartime alliance and the directives of the Motion Picture Bureau of the OWI were carried into the postwar period and reflected in the race problem films of 1949.

Learning to Walk: Understanding Difference in the Postwar Moment

The first notable difference between the two versions is that the second scene in the play includes all four white soldiers (Coney, Finch, Mingo, and T.J.), whereas in the film Moss is absent. In the film this exclusion allows time for an explanation for how Moss, a black soldier, got attached to a white unit in a segregated army. Yet this exclusion, this minor difference as Kramer and the reviewers would have it, separates Moss from the camaraderie and solidarity bonds formed between men fighting in the same unit in war. In the play, Coney and Finch are army buddies with no prior history as civilians. Their relationship therefore replicates other war movies and stories where men become battle buddies under stress and often sacrifice their lives to save one another or prove their valor in hand-to-hand combat. In the film version, on the other hand, Moss and Finch are friends from high school. They share a deep bond from their youth, but it does not extend to their war-time experiences as grown men. Moss as black man is erased from the shared experiences of many who would have been in the film audience – he does not, as black men generally did not during WWII, share the bonds of war with white men. Dramatizing the combat bonds formed between black and white soldiers were important elements of *Crash Dive*, *Bataan*, and *Sahara*, because blacks and white did not fight side by side in World War II. Thus, as the films were meant to create unity, the bonds between the white and black soldiers are dramatized and developed throughout the course of the films. In *Home of the Brave*, rather than prove himself and deepen his relationship with other soldiers on the battlefield, in the film, Moss cries when his friend dies and has to be helped off the island by a wounded

soldier. Finch's high school relationship to Moss proves less valuable than the battle experiences Coney shared with the same men in the stage version.

The second scene in the play opens with Coney and Finch waiting in a room where they've been called to meet with the Major. At this stage, Coney and Finch have already hatched a plan for a restaurant/bar for when they return home, demonstrating their bond and alluding to long hours spent in conversation. Coney wants a bar and Finch a restaurant. Coney asks if Finch has told his mother and asks what she'll think. Finch says, "Mothers don't understand about bars. But I wrote her about how I'm going to paint pictures on the walls and about how it's going to be the kind of place you said." To which Coney says, "Where a guy can bring his wife." Finch, "She liked that" (22). Here we see the bond developed by Coney and Finch as going beyond the homosocial and into the realm of the family since Finch's mother becomes part of their intimacy. The scene continues:

Coney: Does your mother know who I am?

Finch: Of course.

Coney: I mean, does she know my name?

Finch: Well, sure she does!

Coney: Oh.

Finch: What did you think?

Coney: I don't know. I just wondered.

Finch: You can be an A-1 jerk sometimes. The whole family knows about you

and Mom's so het up, I think she's got ideas about mating you with my sister. (23)[58]

Putting aside for the time being the derogatory implications of "mating you with my sister," this scene shows Finch's dedication to taking Coney into his life. He has told his family about their relationship and the fact that Coney is Jewish, and Finch's mother (with Finch's approval) even wants Coney to marry her daughter. No equivalent scene exists in the film. A black man cannot "mate" with a white daughter or sister – a word that calls forth images of animal husbandry and therefore miscegenation. While a Jewish American is white enough for intermarriage, a black man is not; the cracks in the ethnic analogy and claim of universal assimilation of all minorities begin to become evident.

In the film, two scenes mirror this brief one. During one of Moss's early narco-synthesis treatments, after telling the doctor that Finch doesn't let people get away with "cracks" (the light way of saying racial insults and derogatory comments), he has a flashback to his high school days with Finch. They are shown playing basketball and chumming around after school. Finally, on high school graduation night, Finch arrives at Moss's house to find out why he didn't come to Finch's party. Finch asks Moss why he won't come:

[58] Bloom says of this scene, "What is interesting about this interchange is that Coney self-inscribes his not-whiteness and Fitch defines him as white. Coney's self definition as the Other reveals Jewish anti-Semitism, although in this case, it is a small example" (7). Here we go back to Kramer's assertion that using a black man was a better "mechanical" difference and did not rely on Coney naming himself (doubly) as Jew.

Moss: You know.

Finch: No I don't.

Moss: It wouldn't be good, Finch. Everybody would be uncomfortable.

Including me.

Finch: Why, they play basketball with you. They like you. You know they do.

Moss: That's different. I'm different.

Finch: You make yourself different.

Moss: It wouldn't be good, Finch. Who would I go with? What would I do?

Stand around and talk to you all night? What if something happened?

Finch: Nothing would!

Moss: What if somebody said something?

Finch: Oh … [In agreement, but with resignation]

Finch: Go on home kid, they'll be wondering what happened.

Here there is not the loving embrace by the family of the stranger/war buddy Coney; there is no mention at all that Finch's family welcomes his high school friend or that they even know he has a black friend. Instead, Finch accepts that "somebody [might] say something" to Moss, whereas in the play Finch points out the lack of prejudice in his family to Coney. And, despite Kramer's attempt to show that whites and blacks are "altogether similar" and his idea that the audience can *see* that Moss is black instead of having to be *told* that Coney is Jewish, the film nonetheless makes Moss the one to inscribe difference. As will become more evident in this discussion of the film, it is Moss,

not the perpetrators of white supremacy, who is responsible for his feelings of difference. Through swapping a black man for a Jewish character, the film suggests that a black and a Jew can assimilate in the same way while marking and making Moss different than Jew (and white).

Further emphasized in this flashback (which takes place after the exclusion of Moss from the group of soldiers – see below) is the fact that Moss has no black community support. At the end of the flashback sequence, the doctor asks Moss why he didn't write to Finch when he moved away after high school, "But you liked him didn't you? He's the best friend you ever had?" The doctor's questions and the visual narrative of the flashback isolate Moss. As far as we know he existed solely as Finch's friend. There appear to be no other black students at his high school; he appears to have no other friends. On graduation night he sits on his porch, attached to a lit but virtually empty home. Where is his family? Who is there to celebrate his achievement? Though he tells Finch, "don't worry about it, I don't have a tux anyway," we hear no more about his lifestyle or background.[59] Moss may be allowed to express the rage stemming from oppression (later in the film we see the sources of his resentment), but he has no community from which to gain strength, knowledge, support, or solidarity. He discusses no similarities between his and other African Americans' experiences. He therefore ends up isolated and wholly individualized as a single black man facing the prejudice of a

[59] And can only make inferences based on not having a tuxedo.

small group of (mostly good and tolerant) white men.[60] Since Moss has no black community, he can offer no alternative to acculturation/assimilation model. Without an alternative, the movie suggests that his only option is to accept and adapt himself to the white world; thus, by showing that he has not taken his only option, the movie can show it is his responsibility to change. While the film erases Moss's history, it also whites out the tensions associated with black army service in a Jim Crow army and the tensions of the home front environment, sometimes erupting into violence (both during and after the war there were race riots and an increased incidence of lynching).[61]

The second scene in the film that mirrors the one between Coney and Finch takes place in the jungle. Moss has brought along some fried chicken for the mission, which prompts T.J. to reminisce about black cooks and entertainers. The shift to foreboding music indicates that T.J.'s statements are out of line and solidifies him as

---

[60] There are many similarities between the isolation seen here and that of the black characters in wartime movies such as *Sahara* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), *Crash Dive* (1943) and *Lifeboat* (1944). These movies all feature one black character among a rag-tag group of soldiers. Their place there is accidental, but they are never outright demeaned by a group of whites. In other words, as viewers we only have to see a few bad men, not a whole country or army of them. Interestingly, in *Bataan*, the black soldier, Eeps, is made to dig all the graves and yet this is somehow done without degrading him directly. As Cripps puts it, "Thus it came to pass that the metaphor of the lone Negro set down in a lost patrol, lifeboat, landing party, became the core of a polyethnic genre that would define a black place in American life for the next generation" (68). He also adds, "The four movies, appearing in a nine-month span at midwar, simultaneously forecast an enhanced black status as a result of war while showing whites they had nothing to fear from change" (72). In relation to *Lifeboat*, during the war there was a black soldier named Charles Jackson French who "saved a raftfull of wounded comrades by pulling them through shark-infested waters" (Murray 15). A similar deed is ascribed to John F. Kennedy.

[61] William C. Berman, in *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration* notes the increase in racial violence following WWII. He tells us that "Racial violence, often producing bloodshed and death, extended into the immediate postwar period. An already tense situation had been further exacerbated by the return of black veterans who were demanding the right to register and vote in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia" (44). He tells us that also at this time, "Responsible and politically conscious Negro leaders were asking in the spring and summer of 1946 that the president of the United States take cognizance of, and do something about, the rapidly deteriorating racial situation, north and south, as indicated by the fresh outbreak of lynching and other forms of violence" (38-9).

racist because his stereotypes resemble those from the minstrel stage – stereotypes which, by this point, were being vocally condemned by the NAACP and others, like the Motion Picture Bureau of the Armed Forces.[62] This incident leads to a discussion between Moss and Finch about where Moss learned to cook, what he did after high school, and what jobs were open to blacks in northern cities. Moss finally says he wants to open a restaurant some day to which Finch says he wants to open a bar – "the kinda place you could take your wife." Thus the roles are switched. In the play, Coney wants to open the respectable bar and Finch the restaurant. Instead, in the film, Moss is circumscribed by the limited opportunities which, he recognizes, exist for African Americans – he can be a cook, yes, but a bar owner, no. He also, it seems, can't be responsible for talking about respectability – would this be too much like the uplift models of racial progress? Also, to whom would it be respectable, blacks or whites? While this discussion is taking place, patriotic and sentimental music is playing and builds to a crescendo. Moss and Finch are to fulfill the American Dream not only with the entrepreneurial spirit but also with a display of racial tolerance that Finch, and not Moss, is apparently willing to fight for:

> Finch: Hey, what's the difference a bar or a restaurant, let's combine it. You and me.

---

[62] Michael Rogin's interesting read of this: "The film puts blackvoice imitations and racist stereotypes, including a reference to Finch and Moss as Amos and Andy, into T.J.'s mouth. That method of distancing itself from blackface allows *Home* to do its own blackface on a far more powerful, because loving, level" (234).

Moss: You're crazy.

Finch: No, no, it's perfect. You handle the kitchen, I run the bar. 50/50.

Moss: Finch, you're outta your mind.

Finch: No, you are.

Moss: Finch you haven't changed, have you. Always getting wild ideas. Don't you know that it wouldn't work?

Finch can look past prejudice and opposition from society and be a fair business partner ("50/50"), while Moss disparages and initially rejects the idea of a partnership. The scene's patriotic music indicates that this partnership should happen, or at least that the audience should want it to be possible. At the same time, this sequence makes Moss responsible for marking his own blackness by announcing that the idea won't work and, in doing so, marks that recognition as a psychological and even entrepreneurial hindrance.[63] Here, the movie blames Moss for not being able to see past his own blackness – exonerating those who enforce white supremacy and blaming the oppressed for their oppression.

In the play, the first two men in the room are Coney and Finch. In the movie, however, Moss is not present at the beginning of the sequence. In the movie it is instead Finch and Mingo (who gets most of Coney's lines from the play) who joke around and exhibit a combat bond. When all four men are in the room in the play, Coney and Finch gang up on T.J. and make fun of his class position:

[63] See note 39, above, where it is Coney who marks his own Jewishness.

Mingo: Just what makes you such a hot blue-plate special, T.J.?

Finch: Don't you know who he is, Mingo? Tell him, Coney.

Coney: (*Exaggerated sotto voce*) That's T.J. Everitt, former vice-president in charge of distribution for Universal Products, Inc.

Finch: No!

Coney: Yeah!

T.J.: Oh, Christ! Do we have to go through that again?

Finch: Say, is he the Joe who used to make fifteen thousand a year?

Coney: Oh, that was a bad year. He usually made sixteen thousand.

Finch: No!

Coney: Yeah!

Finch: Think of the taxes!

Coney: Rugged.

Mingo: Say, what's he doing now?

Coney: Now? Oh, now he's a corporal making sixty-two bucks a month.

This sequence illustrates the bond between Coney and Finch, but it also illustrates Coney's confidence as a character. Many of the jokes are Coney's, he answers Mingo's prompt, and, importantly, ribs a fellow soldier about his class position. The film includes an almost identical sequence between Finch, Mingo, and T.J., but without Moss. Not

only does this exclude Moss from the ribbing, but it also rids the movie of any intersection between race and class.[64]

While the (white) men are awaiting the Major's arrival, they don't know what they're waiting for or what's going to happen. Again, in the play, Coney shares in this anxiety while Moss, in the movie, is excluded. In the play, when the Major arrives he explains that the mission is "top secret" and that "You four men are the best engineers in the outfit. We need A-1 engineers for this job" (34). He later reiterates, "I wouldn't have asked you—particularly you, Mingo, except that I need the best men I have. That's the kind of job it is" (36). Here, again, Moss is absent in the identical scene in the movie. In the movie, the three white soldiers stand around the Major, thinking over the decision they must make (it is a voluntary mission). Here, again, Moss is absent in the parallel scene in the movie, which shows the three white soldiers deliberate about their decision (it is a voluntary mission), exchanging eye contact and worried facial expressions. In the play, all four men think over their decisions. Mingo thinks it's unfair to ask them to choose as a group because "Well, who's going to chicken out in front of anyone else?" (37).). Coney then declares, "either we all go or we all don't go," and the men defer to him to make the final decision, which he does in the affirmative directly to the Major upon his return. Coney's decisiveness signals both his patriotism and his dedication (none of the men really want to do it) – Coney says, "But the Major says

[64] At least one reviewer, however, did see a strong connection, he writes, "As a sop to the left-wing critics, however, the scriveners contrived it that the three [...] white men were poor, whereas the Negro-hater was, in private life, a corporation executive. Corporation executives are always evil men, intolerant of everything but profits" (Mortimer).

we're the four best men. That it's important and it's winning the war" (42). Bloom writes, "Coney moves to a position of whiteness, certainly in terms of a 1945 American audience, when he is the first to volunteer for the mission" (8).). In the movie version of the same scene, Moss enters the orderly room as the Major is about to exit while the men make their decision. By prohibiting Moss from making this patriotic gesture, they further sever the bond between Moss and his fellow soldiers and between Moss and audience members. Additionally, the Major's speech about the (white) men being the best for the job is not directed at the racial minority in the movie as it is to the ethnic minority in the play. This places the possibility of Jewish and black achievement on two different plains. Moss, as we discover when the Major calls his Colonel, was not the *best* volunteer surveyor, he was the *only* one.

When Moss enters the room, all of the men there turn to look, he salutes; he's silent. After briefly questioning him, the Major leaves so that the other men can make their decision. The same conversation takes place in the film as the one in the play, only this time without Moss. After Finch and Moss have a greeting and short talk – Finch recognizes him from high school – the conversation turns back to whether or not to go on the mission. Instead of hesitation being blamed on being "chicken" as in the play, in the movie T.J. says, "We've got our out … Sure, there it is, big and black. On a volunteer mission you've got a right to pick your company." After Mingo angrily stares in response, T.J. says, "…I don't know about you, but I'm not going on a job like this with some

bogie."[65] T.J. is reflects the thinking of the whole structure of the army when he says he won't fight with a black man. He says, "Nothing personal against your friend, but why do you suppose the Army's kept 'em out of the line! It's a known fact! It's history." Moss does not get to display patriotism in the film. Instead, Finch is the patriotic one who decides to go on the mission.[66] But even T.J. appears as *extra* patriotic since, despite reaffirming segregationist thinking, in the end, he fights alongside a black man. While Moss stands silent, Finch convinces the men to fight, defends Moss,[67] and rallies T.J. Unlike Coney in the play, Moss plays no active role in this scene.

In the movie, when the Major leaves the men to discuss their decision, he simply leaves Moss standing just inside the door. He doesn't brief Moss about the importance or secrecy of the mission and he doesn't question him about why he ended up volunteering for a mission comprised of white soldiers. Instead, he runs off to call his Colonel. He stammers out to the Colonel that the volunteer is "colored" to which the Colonel replies: "Look, Major, you do know the time element here, don't you? Well, for your information, in this particular M.O.S. I've got two men in the hospital, three in a rest camp and another in a top priority job. That's it, unless you'd care to check the sick list?" He then says, "I'd have sent you another man if I could, but this is the *only available* surveyor specialist who's volunteered. So I wouldn't care if he was purple all

[65] In the play, T.J. calls Coney a "Jakie" (presumably a reference to Jackie Rabinowitz from *The Jazz Singer*) after he and Finch chide him about his class position.
[66] Finch does ask Moss what he thinks, but Moss demurs and says he's already volunteered.
[67] Finch tells T.J. to knock it off and threatens to hit him, saying, "You don't even know Mossy!" when T.J. objects to serving with him.

over and had green stripes down his back! Is that clear?" (emphasis mine). Finally the Colonel concludes, "And if I may ask, what do you think this is, a war or a country club tea-dance?" The Major is silenced. He offers no other objections to Moss for the rest of the film and never insults him or mistreats him. Later he does, however, say to Mingo, "Funny. Ever since we got on this island, I've never thought of him as being black." To which Mingo replies, "And I've never thought of you as being white." This moment is the conclusion of the Major's apprehension to working with black soldiers. The Colonel's defense for sending a black surveyor places expediency before racial considerations in the army, but acknowledges the appropriateness (or at least reality) of segregated environments in private civilian life. Here we see how the liberal message of the movie endorses the desegregation of the army (already underway when the film hits theaters), but goes no further. Thus, the Colonel takes exception to the Major's hesitations about Moss; Finch and Mingo stand up for Moss; and it is only T.J. and the Major (whose mind is quickly changed) that represent prejudice in the army. Unlike Coney, this is Moss's only interaction with a white unit and when their prejudices are overcome then the problem, therefore, is presumably solved.[68]

As the above changes indicate, when Coney becomes Moss he loses the experience of having battle buddies, he loses the camaraderie formed in a tight-knit unit, he loses the invitation to marry Finch's sister, he loses the chance to speak for the

[68] Nickel notes, "According to the colorblind paradigm, African Americans would be brought into 'mainstream' society. The country has a homogenous culture, the reasoning went, and thus black and white Americans have more cultural similarities than differences" (28).

group (or at all) when deciding to do a patriotic duty, and he loses the title of "best" at his job (becoming merely the "only" available). While the producers and reviewers of the film make the claim that little in the script was changed when the character went from Jew to black, the losses that Moss's character goes through upon being "turned black," are indicative of the larger, systemic elements of racism – he becomes de-sexed,[69] he seems more like a manservant rather than a strong army soldier, and he loses all history aside from his connection to a white liberal friend. Like several other wartime movies (for example *Sahara* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), and *Lifeboat* (1944)) that attempted to create respectable black characters in their narratives, Moss is isolated among whites – something caused by happenstance or military necessity. This isolation allows for these movies to picture whites as either tolerant of racial minorities from the start, as easily (over the course of two hours) converted to a place of understanding and respect for (at least one) black man.[70] Yet, *Sahara*, *Bataan*, and *Lifeboat* do not face

[69] In the play, Finch asks Coney, "You think girls want it as much as fellas?" Coney: "More." Finch: "But more girls are virgins." Coney: "Enemy propaganda." Finch: "I wonder if my sister is. Would you care?" Coney: "What?" Finch: "If the girl you married wasn't?" Coney: "Stop trying to cook up something between me and your sister" (47). In the movie, however, this conversation takes place between Finch and Mingo. Moss is standing in the background, completely uninvolved. While it gives Mingo a chance to show resentment toward women (his wife left him), it offers Moss no chance at idly discussing sexuality with a buddy. In the movie the part about Finch's sister is totally expurgated. As Richard Wright tells us in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," "Among the topics they [whites] did not like to discuss with Negroes were the following: American white women; the Ku Klux Klan; France, and how Negro soldiers fared while there; French women; Jack Johnson; the entire northern part of the United States; the Civil War; Abraham Lincoln; U.S. Grant; General Sherman; Catholics; the Pope; Jews; the Republican Party; slavery; social equality; Communism; Socialism; the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution; or any topic calling for positive knowledge or manly self-assertion on the part of the Negro" (14).

[70] For an interesting look at the Southern liberal understanding of the differences between a "good black" and a "bad white," and the exceptions made to the racial code to protect "respectable" blacks in Southern communities, see Malcolm Gladwell's "The Courthouse Ring: Atticus Finch and the Limits

racial prejudice in their scripts, the black men are simply present – found among the detritus of war – and they serve and protect (this time without the heavily stereotyped role) as expected. But *Home of the Brave* is a movie that is trying to face prejudice.[71] Based on ads and promotional materials, *Home of the Brave* is "The motion picture that dares to take a stand and stands alone!" (Home). Kramer himself makes the oft-repeated claim that "It was […] the first picture to tackle the theme of antiblack [sic] prejudice head-on; the first American film not to mince words about racism—for instance, we were the first to have a character use 'nigger' in anger (40-1). These story elements do mark the movie as unique for its time. Many respected the use of racial epithets as mature and realistic.[72] As one reviewer put it, "in its probing of that sore spot in the social set-up of our republic, the screen-play is frank and to the point, mincing hardly any words and using few circumlocutions in reaching its decent conclusions" (Cameron). A reviewer in *Life* writes, "The power of the film comes from the simple honesty of the young actors who play the soldiers, the sharp, vigorous direction and mostly from the fact that the script boldly and deliberately uses crude situations and crude words—'nigger,' 'shine,' 'bogie'—to expose coldly the folly of race

---

of Southern Liberalism." I thank Brian Bremen for alerting me to this source. Oddly enough, the men willing to stand up for black men in these stories are both named Finch.

[71] Cripps discusses the move from the lone black in wartime movies to the postwar movies as follows: "Replacing the platoon or the submarine in this formula was the small town, hospital, or other social circle. Set down in its midst was the black protagonist, often so laden with virtue as to invite carping from critics who thought he tainted the message, yet, as Kramer said, so decent as to oblige the viewer to regard race as the *only* reason for discrimination" (221).

[72] Bogle writes, "American moviegoers now wanted to be pounded over their heads with facts, with guts, with realism. And they were willing to accept controversy. Thus the tone of American movies underwent its first stage of racial change" (143).

prejudice" ("Movie" 143). Yet, it is in the use of racial epithets and curse words where we find still more differences between the stage and the screenplay.

Laurents's play does not shy away from using curse words and anti-Semitic language.[73] Yet the movie version adds several scenes that increase the racial tension that the play produced at the same time that it removes some of the curse words in order to lighten Moss's impact on a white audience.[74] In the play, Coney is able to defend himself. When tensions flare between T.J. and Coney in the jungle, Coney calls T.J. a "son of a bitch" (52) and a few lines later threatens, "listen, T.J."; but in the movie, Finch comes to the quick defense of Moss, who says nothing. After this flare up in the play, Finch tries to convince Coney that he doesn't feel any different about him because he's a Jew. In the play, Coney calls Finch an "Arizona hayseed," along with insults like "dope" and "corny bastard." In the movie, Moss can engage in the more general name calling – using "dope" and "corny bastard" – but cannot make specific reference to a white man as a "hayseed," which connotes white, country naiveté. Another difference between the play and the movie takes place after Finch has been shot and Coney is alone dealing with the loss. In the play, Coney says, "Your name is Coen and you're a—"

---

[73] The play version, in fact, uses a lot more curse words. Mingo refers to his wife as a "bitch" (101). At the same time, the Japanese are referred to as "slant-eyed bastards" (61) and "squints" (85), epithets not found in the film.

[74] Already I have discussed the addition of Moss's high school flashbacks, Moss's discussion of the lack of job availability for blacks in Pittsburg, and the addition of T.J.'s reminiscence about fried chicken and a black janitor he knew who was a "natural comedian." There are other additions as well. In the jungle, as Moss surveys, T.J. holds the marker. While Moss is in command (he tells T.J. to move right or left), this command is diminished and belittled by the music in the background – "Pop goes the Weasel" – and the fact that T.J. falls down. Instead of highlighting Moss's skill, the movie makes a fool of T.J.

(105), suggesting self pity, but never actually insulting himself – never naming "Jew" as an insult. In the movie, on the other hand, Moss yells out, "Nigger! Nigger, nigger, nigger, nigger!," which is much stronger in its implications – while self-pitying like Coney, Moss names the insult and identifies with it. Also, because he does not name himself as Coney does (he never says, "Your name is Peter Moss and you're a …"), he loses himself completely to the epithet – he becomes the hated image of the black man in America. Coney, on the other hand, since he names himself, can be seen to represent a man, an individual, dealing with an insult – not a man embodying an underclass.

Finally, in the play, when Coney and Mingo are set to return to the states, T.J. rides them both a bit about their "limitations" – Mingo's amputated arm and Coney's mental instability/status as a Jew. Coney defends himself here:

> T.J.: Are you trying to start something?
>
> Coney: I'm trying to tell you to use your head if you got one.
>
> T.J. If *I* got one? Look, friend, it takes more than a few days in the jungle to send me off my trolley. It's only your kind that's so goddam [sic] sensitive.
>
> Coney: What do you mean—my kind?
>
> T.J.: What do you think I mean?
>
> (*There is a second's wait. Then* Coney's *fist lashes out and socks T.J. squarely on the jaw, sending him to the floor.* Coney *stands there with fists clenched, trembling*.)

There is no comparable self-defense on Moss's part in the movie. Moss, as a black man, is not allowed to strike a white man on film, nor is he to verbally defend himself. In the film, what T.J. says about Moss's return home is more degrading and involves a lot more stereotypes. T.J. is telling Moss how great it will be to return a hero:

> T.J.: You're gonna be the king of Lenox Avenue, Moss.
>
> Mingo: Moss lives in Pittsburg.
>
> T.J.: Ah, he knows what I mean. Just think of it, you'll be the toast of Bronzeville. All the Fried chicken and watermelon you can eat. And those smart high yellows eating right out of your hand. Hey, ya know, if I was your manager we'd really cash in, but big. I'd get you endorsements. 'Hero prefers long straight hair and light complexion.' I tell ya we'd make a fortune.[75]
>
> Mingo: T.J.! … Answer the phone. (To Moss) Don't let that Crud get you down.
>
> T.J.: … Well, all's well that ends well. Too bad about Finch though. Shame you had to leave him. But I guess the good die young.
>
> Mingo: Shut up, T.J.!
>
> T.J.: Huh?
>
> Mingo: Get outta here.
>
> T.J.: You crazy, Mingo?

[75] That T.J. would call forth some of the internal prejudices of the black community here is puzzling, and I thank Brian Bremen for bringing this to my attention. Is the stereotype there to embarrass Moss about African Americans' apparent preference for lighter-skinned individuals in popular culture? Or is it meant, like the Amos and Andy comment in the film, to highlight T.J.'s insensitivity? The question is too big to address here, but it is interesting to note the similarity between T.J.'s words here and Ben's, the black ex-prize fighter in *Body and Soul* (1947): "It always felt so good after a win … walk down Lenox avenue, kids all crazy for you and proud, champion of the world!"

Mingo: I said get outta here.

T.J.: Okay, I won't fight with a cripple.

The doctor validates Moss's and Coney's rage,[76] but it is only Coney who is allowed to act on it physically. . In the movie, by contrast, Moss does not defend himself verbally in this or any other scene, yet the play calls for Coney to punch T.J. In other words, Moss must endure greater insults as well as subdue (and in fact totally be devoid of) any violent sentiment.

As Rogin puts it, "Having exposed black rage, *Home* must dissolve it" (238). This "slight change" has wider repercussions – the militancy many blacks were feeling after the war left failed to result in major social or economic gains at home is here reduced to a call for a change in attitude. This change in attitude, the movie promises, will result in the aide and protection of white men (even if those white men are crippled); they will rise up to defend you and all you have to do is accept that you're "just like everyone else" (even though you're not allowed to be violent, are excluded from army camaraderie, and are de-sexed to the point of becoming a "mammy"[77]).

This scene also, according to Walter White's commentary, wipes out yet another aspect of African American history. White says, "Most of those [African Americans] who

---

[76] Even in this, there is disparity. The doctor encourages Moss and Coney to walk by yelling the very same epithet that Finch says to them ("You lousy, yellow Jew bastard, get up and walk!" (121) vs. "Get up and walk, you yellow bellied Nigger!"), yet the play contains a scene validating Coney's rage that the movie does not contain: Coney: "He [T.J.] makes me think of things and I—want to jump him." Doctor: "Why not? That's a good, healthy reaction" (131).

[77] See Rogin for a discussion of Moss as a mammy character (235). Also, As Nickel puts it, "The Dream Factory produced the white liberal fantasy of black equality without sexuality, avoiding any worry of miscegenation" (32).

couldn't take any more reacted as did the forty-seven Negroes for whom I acted as defense counsel in Guam. When they got tired of being made the target of hand grenades, bullets, stones and insults from white Marines they took matters into their own hands. They fought back."[78] The movie replaces this legacy with a silent, crying, intimidated black man who nonetheless is proud to have served the country by retrieving the maps. This scared and paralyzed black man brings forth the negative stereotypes created in the press and by the War Department about black soldiers during World War Two. *The New York Times*, for example, reports that Truman K. Gibson Jr., the civilian aide to the Secretary of War (Henry L. Stimson), "conceded that certain units of the Ninety-second Division had engaged in 'more or less panicky retreats, particularly at night'" (Braker 12). This damning report was railed against by the black press, such as Adam Clayton Powell's reaction in the *People's Voice*, where he says, "We had heard no rumor of lack of courage or ability of these colored troops, nor do we now believe such a rumor" (Powell, "Soapbox," 24 Mar 45, 5). Yet, the movie fails to challenge this stereotype due to its creation of a weak and paralyzed crying black man, who is saved not once, but twice by a crippled white man. As White points out, this serves to erase the history of conflict and valor of black soldiers and replaces it with the stereotypes of weakness and cowardliness.

Returning Home: Sameness and Slippage

[78] Rogin suggests a similar reading: "The price of gaining white sympathy for the lone, unthreatening African American was the elision of the actual conditions of black military service: the bonds among black soldiers, the collective life, communal resistance—and the punishment of African Americans in uniform" (250).

All of these changes to the script circumscribe Moss in ways that Coney was not – they point to the inherent and systemic racism against blacks at the time, while making the claim that a black man can make it just as easily as a Jewish man can. Reviewers, both recent and from when the film was released, do not comment on these major character differences, they instead focus on the honorable depiction of anti-black racism. But what is even still more interesting to note is how different Moss and Coney are in their similarities.

After the tussle between Finch and T.J. (in the play), Moss and Coney give nearly the exact same speech, except for several key changed sentences. It is worth quoting both speeches in full:

> I told you I heard something in the middle of the night once. Some drunken bum across the hall from my aunt's yelling: Throw out the dirty sheenies! … That was us. But I just turned over and went back to sleep. I was used to it by then. What the hell! I was ten. That's old for a Jew. When I was six, my first week in school, I stayed out for the Jewish New Year. The next day a buncha kids got around me and said: 'Were you in school yesterday?' I smiled and said, 'No.' They wiped the smile off my face. They beat the hell out of me. I had to get beat up a coupla more times before I learned that if you're a Jew, you stink. You're not like the other guys. You're—you're alone. You're—you're something—strange, different. Well, goddamit, you make us different, you dirty bastards! What the hell do you want us to do? (55)

The movie version says:

> I told you I heard something in the middle of the night once. "It was some drunken bum across the alley yelling 'throw the dirty niggers out' … That was us. But I just turned over and went back to sleep. I was used to it by then. What the hell! I was ten. That's old for a picaninny. When I was six, my first day in school, some kids got around me, white kids, they said, 'Hey, hey you, is your father a monkey?' I was dumb. I smiled and said, 'No.' They wiped the smile right off my face, they beat it off. I had to get beat up a coupla more times before I learned that if you're a Colored, you stink. You're not like other people, you're not like white people at all. You're alone, you're strange, you're something different. Well, you make us different! What do you want us to do? What do you want us to be? (55)

The very fact that the play and the movie put a Jewish American man and African American man in the same scenario in the army hardly justifies their nearly identical experiences as children. In the similarity of experience, however, racial difference is marked permanently for the black man. While Coney remarks on the strangeness of being alone and different from other "guys," Moss says he's not like other "people," specifically "not like white people at all." The changed text places Moss in an unmovable, unchangeable minority subject position, while Coney, in comparison, is not different from other whites per se and seems to be able to fit in at times (especially when ethnic difference is not immediately evident). In the play Finch tells Coney, "I

didn't even realize out loud that *you* were [Jewish] until somebody said something" (56). Compare this to Finch's mute acceptance that "somebody might say something" to Moss at his party. In the first case, we see the ability of Coney to blend with the larger white population. In the second, we see Moss racially marked as unwhite. Additionally, the film is unwilling to allow the two men the same experience of blending into different white settings. This is most visible in the fact that Coney's accusers are across the hall and Moss's are across the alley, which avoids any connotations of cross-racial living arrangements, even in a northern city. Finally, where Coney swears, Moss does not, which silences rage that Coney is able to express, but not Moss. Thus, while the same story is seemingly being told, we learn it is impossible for the story to be the same for two racially different protagonists.

Two other similar speeches strike markedly discordant tones in the play and the movie. In both the play and the movie, the doctor says "You've been thinking you had some special kind of guilt. But you've got to realize something. You're the same as anybody else. You're no different, son, no different at all" (137). To this Coney says, "I'm a Jew" (137) and Moss says, "I'm Colored." The doctor's response to his patient's claim of difference is handled differently in the play (with a Jewish patient) and the movie (with a black patient). In the play, he says:

> This Peter, this sensitivity has been like a disease in you. It was there before anything happened on that island. It started way back. I only wish to God I had time to really dig and find out where and when and why. But it's been a disease.

> Sure, it's been aggravated by T.J. By people at home in our own country—but if you can cure yourself, you can help cure them and you've got to, Pete, you've got to! (137)

By contrast, the movie version goes as follows:

> There, that's sensitivity. That's the disease you've got. It was there before anything ever happened on that island. It started way back. It's not your fault, you didn't ask for it. It's a legacy. 150 years of slavery. Of second-class citizenship. Of being different. You had that feeling of difference pounded into you when you were a child. And, being a child, you turned it into a feeling of guilt. You always had that guilt inside you. That's why it
> was so easy for you to feel guilty about Finch.

The doctor goes on to say that people need scapegoats and that they feel insecure. The doctor concludes, "That's why you've got to be cured, that's why. So when people make cracks, try to make you feel different, you've a right to be angry, but you're no right to be ashamed,[79] do you understand me?" The solutions, while seemingly the same, reveal slippages between the types of agency that the playwright and the filmmakers were willing to assign to their protagonists. Coney's problem is "like a disease," whereas Moss has the disease. Coney is asked to cure himself and his people. Moss needs to be cured by someone else so that he will not feel ashamed. This subtle agency gap between the two men is relevant since this is the solution to the race problem that the play and the

[79] See my note 57, above.

movie provide. Moss is made part of a generalized black legacy that he is then asked to excise.[80] His personal history remains obscure. The doctor does not attribute Coney's sensitivity to the legacy of Jewish oppression and Coney therefore does not have to shoulder that burden. If Moss represents African American experience in this instance, then the goal of changing individual racists (like the Major and T.J.) becomes the job of African Americans, not whites. They also bear the responsibility for "150 years of slavery." This burdens Moss with a problem he did not create. The doctor recognizes the systemic racism in both cases and in both cases he prescribes a self cure. When the doctor tells Coney to "cure yourself" and tells Moss "you've got to be cured," Moss is further mired by the prospect that a racist majority is going to heal him so that he can withstand more abuse without being ashamed and without verbally or physically defending himself.

The differences that the movie creates out of the text of the stage play separate Moss and Coney by a gulf that seems uncrossable. While Coney becomes the doctor's assistant in his down time ("I type up his records and—sort of keep 'em straight for him" (126)), Moss is given no such duties. In the play, when the Major comes to say goodbye

[80] See Rogin's discussion of Moss as characteristic of the psychological damage of segregation as used in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Rogin writes: "*Crisis*, anticipating *Brown*, worried about the damage white supremacy did to black self-esteem. It feared that African Americans would try to avoid racial prejudice simply by remaining in a segregated milieu. Most Negroes lived in a 'dis-integrated' world, as one article put it, evoking Du Bois's link between segregation and internal psychic division. 'Stroking old wounds, … the young Negro' was often 'unwilling to undergo the self-discipline and self-denial that are required as part of the integration process.' The writer was describing Peter Moss. Unwilling to subject himself to white disapproval, Moss fails (in flashback) to show up at Finch's (all-white) high school graduation party; the doctor opens old wounds to heal them for integration" (256).

to Moss and Mingo, he says, “The three of us have been together for such a long time that it’s—well, it’s like saying goodbye to your family” (152). In the movie, thought they wait for him, the Major never even shows up to say goodbye. Moss is thus doubly excluded from the family – neither able to marry Finch’s sister nor embrace the Major, the filmmakers refuse any suggestion of miscegenation between blacks and whites, whereas it is possible between whites and Jews. Hence, in the end, when Coney/Moss take up their responsibility to cure themselves, it is easier to see Coney believing that he can get past the racism he has encountered. They both say, “I was crazy … yelling I was different. (*Now the realization comes*) I *am* different. Hell, you’re different! Everybody’s different—But so what? It’s O.K. because underneath, we’re—hell, we’re all guys! We’re all—O Christ! I can’t say it, but am I making any sense?” (164). Coney has been part of the “family” and has stood up for himself. Moss has squelched his rage and been defended by others, made voiceless by them. In the happy ending of the film, when Moss and Mingo decide to become partners, an audience could rightly be incredulous about Moss’s chances for success since Moss does not share in the same opportunities

of his Jewish counterpart.[81] Coney and Mingo, who are not indelibly marked as racially other, may actually make it in business.[82]

What the film *Home of the Brave* offers, besides, as one reviewer puts it, the coming "directly and honestly to grips with the evil of racial defamation, which is one of the cruelest disturbers in our land" (Crowther 1), is a solution for Moss's problems. Moss's biggest hurdles stem directly from the prejudice and discrimination he felt as home, but they are particularly tied to his feeling of "difference," a major focus in the narrative. In several scenes Moss and other characters show how inclusion and acceptance are hindered by feelings of difference. Racial antagonisms felt while in high school with Finch, who, the movie suggests, does not feel color prejudice, are attributed by Moss to his own "difference." To this Finch says, "You make yourself different." In treatment, the doctor tells Moss that his "disease" is his "sensitivity" and attributes this disease to the feeling of difference: "You had that feeling of difference pounded into you when you were a child. And, being a child, you turned it into a feeling of guilt. You always had that guilt inside you." Thus, it is up to Moss to learn, as he later does, that "I'm just like anyone else" – the mantra that the doctor assigns to Moss so that he knows that others have felt glad that they were still alive when a buddy got shot and,

---

[81] Rogin offers a reading that corresponds to mine, but offers a different perspective: "Kramer's film marked that difference [the privileged position of Jews compared to blacks] when, in painting its Jewish solider black, it turned its doctor into a Jew—not explicitly, but by replacing his gentile name with no name at all, giving him a Jewish nose and appearance, photographing him from angles and in close-ups that emphasized his facial look, and, unlike the play, hinting at his own experience of racial prejudice" (231).

[82] Coney is cut off, however, from the gentile woman – once Finch dies, presumably he will not be able to meet or marry his sister, thus avoiding possible qualms from either gentiles or Jews about intermarriage.

less directly, for Moss to learn that he must get over the prejudice of others and realize his *sameness* with everyone else.

Moss's ability to get cured relies on overcoming this feeling of difference, even as the film reinscribes it. In an argument with Finch and Mingo, Moss describes his experiences with racism growing up in the United States. He tells them that after the first violent treatment he received at age 6, "I had to get beat up a couple of more times before I found out that if you're colored you stink. You're not like other people; you're not like white people at all … Well, you make us different. What do you want us to do? What do you want us to be?" This climatic moment suggests that the feeling of difference is tied to action. Nickel also notes this connection to action on the part of Moss. He writes, "Although *Home of the Brave* indicts racial bigotry for its damaging effect on a person's psyche, it seems to place ultimate responsibility for Moss's impairments on Moss himself, on how he responded to racism. Moss's affliction is that he thinks like a black person" (36). That Moss should *do* or *be* something, prescribed presumably by those who hold power, to lose the feeling of difference and walk again ties this film directly to the liberal tolerance agenda that encouraged racial minorities to adopt white beliefs and behaviors to then be accepted into the mainstream. In the last scene, when Mingo and Moss are set to return to the States, Moss learns how to move forward (beyond just the ability to walk). It is his *behavior* that will determine if he "goes down the drain," not his "indelible" black skin. He chooses otherwise – in fact, he decides to go into the restaurant business with Mingo. Mingo, however, is the one to

suggest this. Moss is not given the responsibility for his own entry into mainstream society, even though the movie suggests, and the play affirms through Coney's character, that self-assertion and the loss of resentment are the answer to the race problem. Finally, since the business partnership and personal union that the film predicts cannot take place on screen, then it remains deferred, un-visioned, and unreal. There is no homefront welcome and we are left with simply the good intentions of the white one-armed man.[83]

The Home Front: Conclusions

The prospects for change in the U.S. in the 1940s and 1950s were vast. There was broad economic expansion, there was a housing boom, and there were thousands of vets taking advantage of the opportunities offered through the G.I. Bill. African Americans and other racial minorities were not wholly excluded from these new opportunities and were, in fact, encouraged to understand their struggles in the U.S. as exemplifying and contributing to a narrative of progress that would eventually lead to wide acceptance by the mainstream of America. This progress narrative played a large role in the creation of wartime propaganda. And at the same time, movies offered the American Dream to viewers[84] and now that dream seemed open to racial minorities, even as the solution or resolution of the problems in the films reflected the status quo.

---

[83] Using Eve Merriam's poem "The Coward," the final scene ends with Moss saying to Mingo, "Hey, coward … Take my coward's hand," exhibiting the only self-assertive moment for Moss in whole movie.

[84] Cripps writes, "Let it be granted that movies unreel in a dreamlike state in a darkened room that may enhance receptivity, that the closure of Hollywood movies on happy endings confirms things as they are, and that therefore they contribute to a cultural superstructure that has favored dominant mentalities" (viii).

Coupled with these movies were far reaching indications of change. Cripps suggests, however, that black Americans were not simply fooled by these messages (even though real change did not occur in America at this time), but were instead part of the process of changing the messages contained in American film. He writes, "Far from seeing themselves as dupes of a meretricious white government, they stood as black activists in common cause with conscious-liberals, whose propaganda of national unity might be turned to goals shared with African Americans" (36).[85] Thus, the ending of *Home of the Brave* – joining black and white under the spirit of unity – may have been an inspiration to blacks, even as they could see the slippages in the message itself.

Rogin tells us, "Whereas Ralph Ellison and Frantz Fanon indicted the movie, *Crisis* endorsed it" (254). Ellison's critique involves the switch from paralysis brought on by guilt with a "racial element" to a guilt that "everybody" feels in war (278), whereas Fanon's critique involves the idea that "equality" between black and white can only be achieved between a crippled white man and an able-bodied black man (119). Nickel, on the other hand, is much more emphatic in his description of audience opinion of *Home of the Brave*:

> A Hollywood producer's uplifting moment can be another person's slap in the face, especially if that person is not part of the primary intended audience for a

[85] Crispps continues, "And of course they had their point. Every black American knew the details of FDR's 'black cabinet' appointments, his wife's standing up for Marion Anderson in a gesture that a majority of Americans endorsed, Executive Order 8802 that had created the FEPC, and other favors that for the second time in American history lead black parents to name their children 'Roosevelt.' Already, William Nunn's *Pittsburg Courier* had begun its Double V campaign with its attendant beauty contests and essay competitions designed to suggest an unbreakable linkage between the national struggle against fascism and the black struggle against racism" (36).

movie. '*This, then, is the equation with the Negro oppressed—a one-armed white man*,' the famous African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry concludes sardonically. 'Is it really necessary,' asks James Baldwin, 'to lose a woman, an arm, or one's mind, in order to say hello?' In his classic *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon sums up Mingo's reassurances to Moss in the final scene: 'Resign yourself to your color the way I got used to my stump; we're both victims.'[86] (41)

Thus, while the white and black press, in the main, heralded *Home of the Brave* as a brave movie with a good message, not all viewers held out the same optimism for postwar and wartime unity.[87] Yet, the presence of the movie itself and those like it may have held more force than the particular message could.

And yet, as many current critics contend, moviemakers and the films they produced did play a role in shaping American opinion. Nickel argues that "These movies were liberalism encapsulated. As we shall see, they helped foster an environment in which, at a gradual pace, real reforms could be achieved" (26). Thus, the movies were representations of the program espoused by liberalism at the time.[88] Bogle writes that "It was during the war years, more than ever before, that the great gift of the movies,

---

[86] Fanon's response to this is: "Yet, with all my being, I refuse to accept this amputation. I feel my soul as vast as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers; my chest has the power to expand to infinity. I was made to give and they prescribe for me the humility of the cripple" (119).

[87] Not every review, even in its praise, was optimistic about the dissemination of the message. One example is Jimmy Star, who writes, "The picture won't solve any racial problems, but it certainly presents them fairly and with outstanding courage … I sincerely hope it will broaden a great many narrow minds …"

[88] As Robert Bendiner, writing in *Commentary* in 1949, would have it, "Out of some 140,000,000 people in the United States, at least 139,500,000 are liberals, to hear them tell it, *liberal* having become a rough synonym for *virtuous*, *decent*, *humane*, and *kind to animals*. Rare is the citizen who can bring himself to say, 'Sure I'm a conservative. What of it?' And any American would sooner drop dead than proclaim himself a reactionary" (238).

that of allowing people to escape to other worlds where blues, bad times, and heartaches could be forgotten, was most consciously employed" (121). Christopher Jones confirms that audiences were ready for the race problem movies. He writes:

> Because of numerous factors, among which were the lessening of racial prejudice brought about by black participation in the war, and the exposure of Americans to the horrifying effects of racism in Europe during World War II, American film audiences of the late 1940s were ready for a treatment of racial problems that was more daring than what had been provided previously by the white-controlled film companies. (110)

Bogle suggests that both white and black audiences would have reacted favorably to the message movies. Whites, he suggests, were feeling their "first pangs of guilt" and were ready "to right old wrongs" (137).[89] He also writes:

> Audiences wanted to believe racial problems could be abolished if black and white simply took one another's hands, and here the movies reaffirmed that naïve wish. Thus it was no great surprise that patrons left the picture [*Home of the Brave*] content that everything would work out. Even for black audiences, comparing the film's dialogue to Louise Beavers' 'Please don't send me away, Miss Bee' [from the 1934 *Imitation of Life*] Moss's words must have sounded like

[89] Nickel suggests more emphatically that the movies were made for whites: "Liberals saw a powerful instrument of reform in social conscious films, an opportunity to mix propaganda and popcorn. Almost always, the moral of race message movies was intended for Anglo Americans" (27). Cripps agrees that race movies were part of a liberal program for reform. He writes, "Among intellectuals there seemed not only a rededication to racial reformism, but a redefinition of it drawn from the lore of social science, coupled with a renewed faith in film as an advocate of a remedy for it" (152).

> a black declaration of independence. In the end, *Home of the Brave* justified itself by meeting the requirements of its age. (145)

Thus, again, while the messages in these movies certainly were not revolutionary in nature, their existence on the national stage, their popularity, and their optimistic attempts at promoting racial tolerance must have affected the film audience in such a way that suggested that the nation was ready for change. Cripps, while discussing the advent of films which treated African Americans with respect, notes that Roosevelt and the wartime footing made these films necessary on a national level, but contents that, "Necessitarian or not, the movies held out some sort of promise" (65), and that this promise "offered change as a prospect rather than a program" (243). Audiences could thus celebrate what seemed to be an answer to the race problem in America. Envisioned in larger than life images, the sympathies of whites toward oppressed blacks were dramatized for all to see. Like the U.S. government's wartime commitment to presenting a tolerant nation that upheld its own principles, so postwar Hollywood took up the torch to show the promises of American democracy.

Home of the Brave exemplifies many of the themes in the post-World War II era in the United States. The title itself connects the movie to a sense of American pride and patriotism, and reiterates the focus on manhood in the movie – men/soldiers must get over the difficulties they face in order to re-acculturate at "home." Like Capra's *War Comes to America*, male soldiers are representative of Americanism, patriotism, and democracy. The story also prominently reflects the liberal and Democratic Party

platform of racial equality after the war – Moss's treatment at the hands of T.J. and other American racists is clearly unjust. Unity is also prominent theme in the film – much like Capra's vision of multiracial and multiethnic American soldiers coming together to win the war, despite their differences the men in *Home of the Brave* work together to accomplish the mission. Finally, *Home of the Brave* ends with the entrepreneurial spirit of America – Mingo and Moss plan to open a restaurant. Having learned the valuable lessons of individuality and cooperation, Moss can become a businessman and fulfill the American Dream.[90]

Yet, this brand of anti-racism is derived from the objectives of the dominant society, not necessarily the black community, and so, like the liberal discourse of the day, operates in a top-down fashion.[91] The story also reflects a renewed faith in the individual and individual solutions to communal problems – Moss must realize that in his difference he is the same as everyone else. His problem is one of attitude, not of racial discrimination. Similarly, the resolution of the movie suggests that it is individuals – people like Moss, Mingo and Finch – who are responsible for making forward progress in race relations. While ostensibly rewritten to face prejudice and question the racism of America, the film version of *Home of the Brave* reveals the same slippages that can be found in *War Comes to America* and in *The Government Information Manual for the*

---

[90] For reasons why Finch must be excluded from this postwar success, see my note 26, above.
[91] Donald Simpson, in "Black Images in Film—the 1940s to the Early 1960s," points out, however, that after pressure from the NAACP and others, the film industry began to start making films with an "integrationist" bent – something Simpson sees in *Home of the Brave* and which he attributes to the influence of the NAACP. There was, however, a larger increase in black participation in film and propaganda making during and after the war.

Motion Picture Industry. Even as the films in this era make a resounding cry for "sameness" and equality, they themselves are unable to envision this message on the screen. The failings of Coney turned Moss clearly demark the limits to the gains offered to blacks in the postwar era.

During the war, movies such as *Bataan* (1943), *Sahara* (1943), *Crash Dive* (1943), and *Lifeboat* (1944), which all featured single black characters in combat settings, *Since You Went Away* (1944),[92] which focused on civilian life during the war, and Carlton Moss's *The Negro Soldier* (1944), which was made for the OWI, all attempted to carry through on the goal of making movies that had respectable and respectful roles for blacks. By the war's end, audiences were getting used to the changing roles for African Americans in film, yet very few films had yet been made with mixed-race casts where blacks played a prominent let alone lead role. *Home of the Brave* was the first Hollywood film, as the promotional material will remind you, that faced prejudice head-on. But what exactly were Hollywood's or Kramer's goals in creating this first? In the quote from Kramer above it is interesting to note the difference he ascribes to "not only equal" and "altogether similar." Does this formulation highlight difference by noting a human "similarity" or does it erase difference by making a black man react the same as a Jew (or a white?) would when put in a similar situation? Laurents writes, "What *Home of the Brave* was about was simple: Underneath, we are all the imperfect same. I

[92] *Since You Went Away* carries out much of the MBP's directives about promoting wartime morale. The characters in this film recycle their scrap and kitchen fats, shun people buying blacklisted items, follow their ration guides, and "do their part" by joining the civilian ranks.

dramatized this by showing that any soldier who sees the man next to him get shot instantly thinks: I'm glad it wasn't me" (49-50). Here, Laurents characterizes white and Jew as all part of an "imperfect same"; this phrase implies solidarity and tolerance for difference. Kramer's use of "altogether similar," on the other hand, refuses that solidarity at the same time that it denies difference between black and Jew (and white). The differences in plot elements, perceived as minor by reviewers and critics alike, between the play version and the film version of *Home of the Brave* operate in a similar fashion: As the film erases the differences between black and Jew (and white), its alterations of the stage play deny solidarity between a black man and whites/soldiers as well as the black man's historical specificity in America and in the armed forces during World War II.

Even as the film could not realize the message it sought to endorse, it was still attacked for its liberal leanings. The film ascribes to wartime and Cold War patriotism as well as a conservative, gradualist, and individually-based racial tolerance agenda, yet even more conservativism can be found in the number of people who worked on *Home of the Brave* that ended up on the chopping block of HUAC and the Hollywood blacklists. Cripps points out that Lloyd Bridges, who plays Finch, was a "lapsed Communist" and that Jeff Corey, who plays the doctor, "made the lists of no fewer than three HUAC witnesses" (222). Carl Foreman, the scriptwriter, was blacklisted ("Biography"). Rogin, in "Democracy and Burnt Cork," writes, "Victim of the Cold War witch-hunt that would set back racial progress and drive Hollywood even from the ground staked out in *Home*,

Edwards [Moss] refused to name names before HUAC and was blacklisted" (25). The coincidence of blacklists with member of the *Home of the Brave* cast and crew suggests social and political pressure coming down on propagators of the racial tolerance agenda. Thus, despite redrawing Moss to reduce his agency and his rage, the movie failed to satisfy the misgivings of (racist) anti-Communism.

Rogin tells us that "Kramer named his black soldier for Carleton Moss, the Hollywood journalist who had attacked *Gone with the Wind* in the *Daily Worker* and who had then written and starred in the World War II propaganda film, *The Negro Soldier*. The army dropped Moss in 1946 for his 'un-American past,' as the black writer put it" (19). Cripps, on the other hand, tells us it was Foreman who named the character after Moss, having met him during the war, and that "Foreman had taken Moss as a guest to surprise him with the name of 'Mossy' that he had given the hero in his honor, to which Moss responded with a plug in the *California Eagle*" (223). Cripps goes so far as to suggest that "His [Kramer's] company resonated with a leftist sense of mission inherited from the war" (222). Whether Carlton Moss was honored or not by the gesture, we can now see that the essential conservativism of the movie overruled Carlton Moss's radical critique of racism and instead falls more in line with what he did for the U.S. government during the war – working with the patriotic Capra on *The Negro Soldier*, that film, too, endorses patriotism and the notion that participation in American institutions will help blacks gain greater access to the mainstream. Whether the filmmakers of *Home of the Brave* were leftist or not, the movie depicts a conservative

view of race relations that relies on blacks adopting the cultural norms of whites and altering their own behaviors to suit the dominant society. Either way, it is interesting to note how many of the people connected to *Home of the Brave* were punished for their leftism in the height of McCarthyism.

What is particularly interesting about *Home of the Brave* is that the resolution to American racial prejudice and discrimination lies in the beliefs, behaviors, and actions of the black G.I. being discriminated against. The film version of *Home of the Brave*, unlike the play, limits the resentment that the black character expresses against individual racists, but, more importantly, asks that he give up his anger toward the larger white power structure responsible for systemic racism. Because the movie ends on a note of mutual prosperity through cooperation, the plot therefore suggests that members of racial minorities, in this case blacks, can alter their thinking or reevaluate their beliefs and that this will lead to a freer entry into the American mainstream. The integration of European immigrants is the model applied to racial minorities.[93] European immigrants, as Moss is supposed to emulate, changed ethnic behaviors in order to acculturate. It was considered a choice. The movie asks that blacks join in the optimism and in the quest for the "American Dream" as achieved by ethnic immigrants, yet the film cannot even envision what that would look like in a non-military setting. *Home of the Brave* suggests that actions taken by individual racial minorities can advance their progress in

[93] According to Omi and Winant this period is a moment when, "Guided by ethnicity theory, Americans have come to view race as a variety of ethnicity, and to apply to racially defined groups certain standards and values whose pioneers and exemplars were European immigrants" (5).

American society and enlarge their share in American democracy. And yet, at the same time, the movie, as noted above, reduces Moss to a man who exists only to fulfill the transformation of whites. His history is wiped away by a lack of community at home, a lack of camaraderie or connection to other black soldiers in the war, and an attachment to the whites he knows that renders him backboneless, de-sexed, and dependent. His missing history, including what Walter White names as the missing militancy and self-righteousness of black soldiers, is replaced by a set of patriotic and "American" values – proscriptions and promises for full citizenship. Thus when the specificities of history – both the legacies and values of the black community and the racism and oppression of the white world – are erased, one can become part of the American (entrepreneurial and self-actualized) dream. If this is the (patriotic) history that the 1949 racial problem films offer, what happens when African American, or Mexican American and Japanese American, writers fill in the blanks?

The vision of liberal tolerance and the focus on collaboration and shared goals suggests a collaborative stance and, from one point of view, would suggest that African Americans and other racial minorities would thus be more likely to incorporate white standards into their own fiction. In other words, as Moss's history is erased, it is filled back in by the concepts of liberty and equality as expressed as part of the American creed. Fiction writers, on the other hand, who would be less restricted in their writings, would follow this conservative liberalism as part of their message too, but they would have the latitude to fill in Moss's missing history with the specificities of their

experience in the U.S. – those that showed community, those that showed an interaction with the American dream, those that critiqued it's wider application, and those, too, that went beyond the black-white binary. At the same time, while the film had to reign in its radicalism by refusing the sameness of Jew and black, so too did fiction writers seemingly acquiesce to the conservativism of the day. While the films and other elements of the liberal consensus held out the promise of equality to racial minorities, so these racial subjects wrote back both with and against the grain of the concept of American progress in race relations. Just as the films showed the limits of inclusion and equality that the filmmakers were willing to express, so too did the fiction express and expose the limits of the applications of the principles and promises of American tolerance.

Chapter 2: The American Institution and the Racial Subject

Interpreting Education: Maintenance of the Color Line in *Pinky*

Obtaining an education, especially by the sons and daughters of immigrants, has long been a symbolic of the progress narrative in America and of achieving the American dream. Frank Capra's *War Comes to America* (1945), for example, glorifies American achievement in education with a visual montage of American inventions, infrastructure, and industry. *War Comes to America* promises that through the labor of multiethnic and multiracial America, progress is inevitable in science and engineering. Education was also promised to returning veterans of World War II through the Montgomery G.I. Bill, originally known as The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, a bill that not only helped secure housing for veterans, but also supplied assistance for them to receive a college education. Just as *War Comes to America* envisions a progress narrative in the increase of educated soldiers – 20% in WWI to 63% in WWII – so too did the G.I. Bill consider college education a way to "help veterans assimilate into civilian life" ("G.I. Bill"). By using the word "assimilate," the bill suggests that education is a way to move toward the center in America – the mainstream, middle class, white homeowner class. The massive number of veterans who took advantage of the bill's largess – "In the peak year of 1947, veterans accounted for 49 percent of college admissions. By the time the original GI Bill ended on July 25, 1956, 7.8 million of 16 million World War II veterans had participated in an education or training program" ("G.I. Bill") – speaks to the value of education in America in the postwar moment. At the same time, the bill itself figures

education as a promise: as a reward for patriotism, education promises to bring one into the American mainstream.

The works that I explore in this chapter attempt to interpret the promise of education as it applies to racial minorities. The film version of *Home of the Brave* (1949) asks its audience to believe that Moss's chances for entrepreneurial success in mainstream America are good. His chances, however, rely on his ability to get over his resentment toward white America and its racist attitudes and accept the idea that in his "difference" from everybody, he is the "same." In other words, the "sameness" that the movie encourages, as I argue in my first chapter, demands a whiting-out of racial resentments, racial community, and racial solidarity. In the film, this whiting-out is further enacted by the replacement of a Jewish character with a black character, highlighting the belief that (white) ethnic assimilation and acculturation in America serve as models for (non-white) racial assimilation and acculturation. Moss, the protagonist, is to blend into white America, get folded in, without retaining the specifics of his racial heritage in America. This chapter will look at how two works of literature by racial minorities examine the prospect for whiting-out ethnic and racial backgrounds through their education in American and Americanizing institutions. These "institutions," similar to Moss's army experience, are places of indoctrination: the public school system, the military-run Internment camps holding Japanese Americans during the war, and the provincial American small town. These texts explore the promise that one can "become" American by giving up racial and ethnic ties and adopting the (white)

norms of mainstream America, which are represented and reproduced by these institutions.

In this chapter I will focus on the literary works *George Washington Gómez* (1990, completed in 1940), by Américo Paredes, and *Nisei Daughter* (1953), by Monica Sone. I will also include a discussion of the 1949 film *Pinky*, directed by Elia Kazan. Paredes wrote *George Washington Gómez* between the years of 1936 and 1940. I stretch back into the prewar moment to include Paredes's text because it resonates with themes and ideals that become very prevalent in the postwar years. The text focuses in large part on the education of the protagonist George (a.k.a. Guálinto) Gómez ; and in this process of education the text touches on the patriotism and jingoism of wartime; it explores the job opportunities for Mexican Americans coming out of the Depression years; and it focuses on the contradiction of serving one's country in its fight for democracy while enmeshed in an atmosphere of racism and intolerance. Additionally, Sone's narrative of her childhood, which Lisa Lowe, in *Immigrant Acts*, calls "a semiautobiographical first-person narrative" (48), also focuses heavily on the education of the protagonist, Kazuko Itoi (a.k.a. Monica Sone). *Nisei Daughter* reserves much of its narrative space for her prewar years, thus spanning many of the same decades as Paredes's text, where she explores from her perspective the same themes as Paredes. Sone's text, for example, begins on Skidrow in Seattle, a location that brings to mind the Depression years; she also focuses much attention on the prewar/wartime hysteria that resulted in the internment of the Japanese; finally, Sone offers subtle and

provocative insight into the ideal of patriotism from a place of subordination and oppression.

Pinky, as a highly visible major motion picture, envisions a postwar moment where the attainment of education and status for blacks is the key to racial acceptance. Pinky (Jeanne Crain), the light-skinned protagonist, finds herself back in the South after having trained to become a nurse in the north while passing as white. Pinky returns to her small southern town to stay with her Aunt Dicey (Ethel Waters), who is a washerwoman, and who compels Pinky to care for the dying Miss Em (Ethel Barrymore).[94] Miss Em eventually dies and leaves her estate to Pinky, who must go to court to retain it because Miss Em's racist relations (and the majority of the whites in town) are suspicious of the will and it's black benefactor. Pinky wins her case and, instead of returning north with her white finance, Tom (William Lundigan), remains in the small segregated town to open a nursing school for black women. Part of the 1949 cycle of race problem films, Kazan's *Pinky* was the second highest grossing picture that year. Thomas Cripps writes, "Indeed, in the South and in the nation *Pinky* boomed, earning four million dollars by year's end, much of which came from blacks who had broken family rules against sitting in Jim Crow houses" (239).[95] Despite being subject to the censorship of the Production Code Administration (PCA) and local censorship

[94] In some ways, *Pinky* could be said to challenge the masculinist vision of the breadwinner male and homemaker female, as featured in *War Comes to America*. The movie contains few male roles and places Pinky and Aunt Dicey on labor's front lines. See my discussion of Petry in my chapter 3.
[95] And Michael Rogin adds that "The film second to *Jolson Sings Again* in 1949 box office receipts was a racial social-problem film, *Pinky*" (169).

boards,[96] *Pinky* nonetheless was screened throughout the south and can therefore be said to represent an at least palatable if not wholly accepted treatment of the "race problem" in this era. Margaret McGehee argues that in *Pinky* "passing became a vehicle through which racist beliefs and assumptions shared by numerous whites around the country could be exposed, highlighted, and critiqued" (28). The film audience was supposed to have sympathy for the protagonist and, as in *Home of the Brave*, was supposed to understand the ill effects of racism on the main character.

Pinky is a model citizen; she is well educated, well spoken, and well suited to advance economically and socially. As a highly capable professional she is prime candidate for the racial uplift model. She, as a talented individual, could achieve higher social status, but others (like the lower class blacks pictured in the film) could not advance or achieve equality at the same pace.[97] As Tomáš Pospíšil puts it, Pinky represents "the new black generation. She is strong, competent and principled. As a person with professional skills she does not lack self-confidence (in the script her qualification as a registered nurse is stressed almost every five minutes). It was people of this kind that, in the opinion of liberal filmmakers, represented hope for the region and for the USA as a whole" (185). Yet, passing is viewed as a negative life choice in the film, one that denies "what's inside," as Pinky later says.[98] As Pospíšil argues, *Pinky*

---

[96] For a discussion of local censorship see Margaret McGehee and for a discussion of PCA censorship see Cripps.
[97] McGehee argues, "*Pinky* […] focuses on an individual woman's dilemma. *Pinky* screenwriter Phillip Dunne, in fact, wrote a special piece for the *New York Times* promoting *Pinky* as a picture about an individual and not about a race" (41).
[98] All quotes from *Pinky* are from my own transcription of the film.

"deals with the uneasy question of the 'color line,' the issue of passing and the responsibility of the individual not to take an easy way out" (182).[99] Miriam Petty further argues that it is Pinky's choice to ultimately give up the freedoms she enjoyed up North and remain in "her place" down South. Responding to a scene in the movie where Pinky goes to buy a veil[100] and is served as if she is white (until an angry relation of Miss Em, Mrs. Wooley, objects), Petty writes:

> What this scene makes equally clear is that the film places all responsibility for 'passing' with Pinky herself. Scenes like the one in the store suggest that for Pinky, anything other than responding 'I'm colored,' when the salesgirl offers her assistance is 'passing.' Thus the 'social problem' of passing ostensibly comes from within Pinky, not from the society without, a conclusion that is reinforced by the film's positioning Pinky to 'solve' the problem herself, through her remaining south, ending her relationship with Tom, and establishing the black nursing school. (par. 29)

In the conclusion of the film, Pinky, having inherited the home and land of Miss Em, remains in the South and sets up a nursing school and clinic where she passes on her skills to "her people." In the end, her hard work becoming a nurse offers its highest value when she can pass on this knowledge and experience to her own race.

---

[99] As McGehee tells us, "Passing is depicted as a double betrayal [in films of the 1920s and 30s, for example *Imitation of Life* and *Show Boat*]—a betrayal of unknowing and unsuspecting white characters and a betrayal of 'fellow' black characters who find pride rather than shame in their racial identity" (28).

[100] Here, in a instance seemingly lost to critics, Pinky asks the store keeper, "Do you wish to sell me the veil?," which is reminiscent of the Du Boisian "veil." This may be read as part of Pinky's decision to stop passing. She walking into the store intending to pass, but, once discovered, obtains a veil.

The film values her choice to stop passing. While Pinky can "become white" up north, she is drawn back to her roots when the white Tom asks her to marry him. Because she feels she cannot tell Tom about her racial background, she rushes back to Aunt Dicey with nowhere else to go. In other words, here, the racial subject cannot be washed white because of the long held fear that the "blood will tell" and that she will have visibly mixed-race children with Tom. This fear is reinforced in a conversation about passing between Miss Em and Pinky. Pinky says, "How I live my life is my own business, Miss Em." To which she replies, "Course it is. It isn't your husband's business or your children's." Thus, even without the emotional ties that eventually bind Pinky to "her place," the logistical mechanisms of passing (including Tom's later suggestion of hiding everything and moving to Denver) fail to offer her security.[101] The fear of miscegenation, however, is downplayed in Pinky's decision not to marry Tom. In fact, continuing to pass becomes impossible for Pinky, who admits to Tom, "I don't wanna get away from anything. I'm a Negro. I can't forget it and I can't deny it. I can't pretend to be anything else, and I don't want to be anything else. Don't you see, Tom?" Pinky embraces her race and her place within it, and the film thus offers a specific vision of "up lift" and gradualism.

[101] Petty, reading *Pinky* alongside "creature features" reads the fear of miscegenation as a haunting in the film. She writes, "To put it another way, Pinky may be afraid of the place that she is in, but the film will maintain that Pinky is indeed 'in her place'; in it, and of it. Thus ultimately what Pinky is afraid of in this sequence [where she has a nightmare and wakes up yelling Tom's name] is what the film tells us she is afraid of being, of once more becoming, a black person" (par. 15).

Pinky's education gets folded into the progress narrative of improving race relations in America through education and through the legal system. When Miss Em wills Pinky her property and land, she writes in the will that she does this in "confidence in the good use to which I'd put the property." Pinky determines this to mean that she should stay and open a nursing school and clinic and name it after Miss Em. Pinky thus performs her "duty"—to Miss Em by not leaving or selling the land and to Aunt Dicey by giving up passing and remaining home. At the same time, however, it could be said that she does her "patriotic" duty to America. In the court scene, Pinky's reluctant lawyer makes a plea for improved race relations. He says:

> Your honor, this is a small country town. We've always thought that what happened here was our own private concern. This is no longer true … just as it is no longer true that our country as a whole can exist entirely to itself. What is done in our courts in cases such as this has become a matter of moment in the eyes of the world. Let us examine our conscience. Let us look into our attitude and our tradition. Let us take care lest it should be said of us that here there is neither law nor justice …"

The lawyer recognizes that the U.S. must present a narrative of progress in the area of racial tolerance to the rest of the world. He sees this court case as representative of that narrative, and begs that it be fulfilled. Cripps argues that "In fact, long before the NAACP's *Brown vs. Topeka Board* case called attention to the courtroom as civil rights arena, Pinky spoke for her black community by carrying its interests into the dramatic

setting of a Southern courthouse" (236). In other words, Cripps sees this moment as a move toward the civil rights victories later to come through the courts system. *Pinky* does indeed uphold the belief in American democracy through Pinky's victory in court (it should be noted, as well, that there is no jury, just one judge) and offers the liberal sentiment that, even from within a position of oppression and subjugation, it is better to try and change things through legal means rather than through mass protest or radicalism.

Many critics read the ending of the film as upholding the Jim Crow status quo.[102] Pospíšil argues that the moral of the film is that "African Americans should neither attempt to migrate north, nor merge unrecognized with the majority population. They should stay where they are and by means of education and gradual reform change this monstrous and sick region" (186).[103] For our purposes here, however, the film values Pinky's choice. In the end she looks up to the sign for the nursery and clinic, a light shining on her face while she hugs the pole. It could represent in this instance an American flag pole. The film sees her as fulfilling her patriotic duty by staying in her place and yet not losing her ambitions. Kydd argues that "Pinky herself then [like Miss

[102] This institution indeed rules the social patterns and day to day relations of people in the film. McGehee argues, "Her rights may have been upheld legally, but the sexual, social, and geographical divisions between whites and blacks are reinforced, not lost" (33). She also adds that "When Pinky claims her blackness and stops 'pretending she is what she ain't,' she opts to live in a segregated society where her place is firmly fixed" (38). Kydd writes that "the narrative resolution again returns to an absolute definition of racial identity" (116).

[103] Rogin argues that "Pinky decides to uplift her race. She opts for southern segregation, the fixed black identity on which white play with identity depends" (225). And Donald Bogle argues that, in the end, "She is content because she has pride in her race. Yet Pinky is aware that she has sacrificed personal happiness. And so, as is true of all tragic mulattoes, Pinky ends a wiser woman but one not completely fulfilled" (151).

Em] becomes an educator involved in community service, using the advantages she has gained from her education and life as 'white' to assist the betterment of those who cannot pass" (111). *Pinky* interprets education within an uplift model, but suggests gradualism as the strategy – Pinky will have to spend a long time teaching her nurses, and court cases are long in coming and slow moving. The film endorses the idea that she must not give up on education, hard work, or the institutions of American democracy.

The message to the audience is that racism is wrong, especially when directed at an upstanding and educated woman, so let's vocally condemn it and only gradually change it. Like *Home of the Brave*, there is simultaneously the suggestion that *doing* something (i.e. training nurses, increasing the number of educated blacks) will help along the overall acceptance of blacks. In other words, gradualism can be helped by racial minorities themselves and education is one of these routes. As many commentators, from James Baldwin to Michel Rogin, note, however, Crain's whiteness devalues much of the effect of the film – because the actress is white, the audience is sympathizing with the fact that a white woman must endure prejudice, not with the fact that a black woman must. Bogle argues that "the film's greatest compromise was casting white actress Jeanne Crain in the lead role" (152). Bogle continues, "when Jeanne Crain's Pinky was forced to take in washing to earn money for her lawyer's fees—as she stood over a scrubbing board with the carefully placed studio sweat rolling off her perfect porcelain-white face—white audiences were automatically shocked and manipulated so that they sympathized with this lovely white girl compelled to work like

a 'nigger'" (152). As Rogin aptly points out, while Crain can pass down, (in the end) Pinky cannot pass up (225). This compromise throws into question the messages of the film; messages that argue that uplift is a matter of education and community improvement and that whites are inherently ashamed that such an educated black woman would be degraded in the south. Choosing a white actress complicates the message of the film and forces one to reevaluate the promise that education will lead to racial progress.

Additionally, when Pinky returns to the south, it is as if she has amnesia about having ever been black. She tells Aunt Dicey, "try to understand my side. I only came back here because I hadn't anywhere else to go. I'd forgotten what it was like. I've been away a long time, Granny, I've know another kind of life. I've been treated like a human being. Try to understand, Granny, like an equal." She is also shocked when she is sexually and physically harassed by white men as well as indignant at the treatment she receives at the hands of police, who treat her with respect until they are told she is black. These incidents horrify Pinky in a way that would horrify a person who had never even conceived of being treated this way. Because of this, Pinky cannot be made to stand up for the black community her town, but only for herself, for she has forgotten what being black means and has therefore lost her community. *Pinky* also distances its protagonist from what are presented as "lower class" blacks in her community. Jake Waters (Frederick O'Neal) and Rozelia (Nina Mae McKinney) are knife-wielding hustlers and petty thieves, who fight in the street and have a history of arrests. Pink is horrified when she is associated with them by the judge and the police. Aunt Dicey is the black

woman with whom Pinky has a relationship, and Pinky at first is distant and cold Aunt Dicey. The film thus, perhaps inadvertently, suggests that with education, Pinky has segregated herself from her community.

In the end of the film, Pinky is also asked to segregate herself from whiteness. While she can literally "be white" while immersed in education – an institution that promotes white values and the values of equality simultaneously – when she leaves, she must return to her racial community. Her attempt at "sameness" is not successful, for, in the logic of the film, it goes too far. One cannot literally transcend race. The film endorses the idea of gradualism by making it Pinky's moral obligation to "stay black" and help her people, rather than individually "advance" by fully embracing whiteness. The movie therefore suggests that racial subjects should take on the traits of whites without actually trying to become white, maintaining that becoming white is impossible. Thus, because Pinky cannot be white, she must "stay black/stay back" until "her people" sufficiently "advance" enough to be considered equals. This marks Pinky as split subject since she, as an educated white woman, would belong in the mainstream, while she, as a light-skinned black from a "backwards" plantation town, must "uplift" her people rather than find individual happiness. In the end, Pinky is dually segregated – she has moved away from her community, but she must nonetheless accept her segregated place in society.

George Washington Gómez, *Nisei Daughter*, and *Pinky* can all be viewed as attempts at vetting the problem of patriotism and love of country in times when the

country is not living up to the democratic ideal. More importantly, they can all be viewed as texts that try to interpret the promise that links obtaining education with fulfilling the American dream and moving into the American mainstream. All three texts present split subjects who have to make decisions about where they fall – within the racial community from which they come or within the larger mainstream American society from which they are often excluded or rejected. These texts negotiate the promise that ethnic and racial inclusion is possible in the American system at the same time that they question the prospect of cutting racial ties. Cutting racial ties is the prescribed method for American inclusion at this time and is represented in *Home of the Brave* as well as in other race problem films of the era. As John Howard puts it in *Concentration Camps on the Home Front*:

> Once more, there was a sense that so-called nonwhite immigrants and their progeny—as opposed to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrant wave from southern and eastern Europe, increasingly classed as white—required more time to master American ways, were biologically ill-disposed to American public life, even as the Fourteenth Amendment long ago had officially made African Americans part of the citizenry. (59)

It is the washing out, or washing white, that moves the immigrant Italian or immigrant Irish into the mainstream. This promise is extended to African Americans, Japanese American, Mexican American and others despite the inability, as *Pinky* demonstrates, to

wash a racial subject white.[104] In other words, social barriers continue to divide people of non-European ancestry from those with European ancestry, and this distinction is the racial division of white and non-white. In *Pinky* this racial line is maintained even as the film endorses "progress" and tolerance.

The renewed emphasis on American pluralism surrounding World War II, the opportunity for the immigrant son or daughter to serve the country as a show of patriotism and belonging, the continued stress that the promises of the America dream were open to all, and the ideological battle against fascism constantly and consistently butted up against the lived realities of the racial Other in America. As Lowe points out, in many discussions that attempt to tackle the contradiction between the ideal and the lived experience, "positions of 'cultural nationalism' and of assimilation are represented in polar opposition: cultural nationalism's affirmation of the separate purity of its culture opposes assimilation of the standards of the dominant society" (75). Yet this division, this supposed choice between two extremes, need not be rehashed here. Instead, I look to the texts of Paredes and Sone to examine their negotiations with the parameters of this paradox. The promise of American inclusion and tolerance is heard throughout American institutions, is taught to all of its subjects, regardless of race or

[104] As Ngai, in *Impossible Subjects*, writes, "During the Progressive era, assimilative practices emphasized Americanizing immigrants through teaching the English language, the work ethic, the Constitution, and other democratic values. If Europeans could become Americans through education, why could not others? Moreover, in 1918 Congress had granted 'any alien' who served during the First World War the right to naturalize without first making a declaration of intent and without proof of five years' residence, suggesting that loyalty—especially in its ultimate test—qualified one to citizenship. The lower courts naturalized some Japanese, Asian Indians, and Filipinos on that basis" (42).

class or gender. As Lowe puts it, "It is through the terrain of national culture that the individual subject is politically formed as the American citizen: a terrain introduced by the Statue of Liberty, discovered by the immigrant, dreamed in a common language, and defended by the independent, self-made man" (2). She calls this "the American feeling, the style of life, the ethos and spirit of being" that characterizes U.S. national culture (2). These are the same feelings elicited in *Home of the Brave* as Moss and Finch plan their future restaurant to a backdrop of patriotic music – the promise of progress and success for all Americans.

But if you are not mainstream Hollywood and if you are not looking to reassure a rightfully suspicious global audience that America is tolerant and democracy is open to all, why take on the fiction of upward mobility and racial acceptance for all? This chapter examines how Paredes and Sone interpret the idea that obtaining an education can help the second generation immigrant trade off their racial status for a slice of the American pie. Lowe argues that texts engaging with the promise of the American Dream necessarily disrupt and challenge the promise itself.[105] In other words, they take the promise to task and reveal the failures of the promise and expose the non-universality of the universals. In addition to this, the purpose of the texts I look at here seek to obviate the dilemma of the racial subject when faced with what becomes the

[105] As Lowe puts it: "the cultural productions emerging out of the contradictions of immigrant marginality displace the fiction of reconciliation, disrupt the myth of national identity by revealing its gaps and fissures, and intervene in the narrative of national development that would illegitimately locate the 'immigrant' before history or exempt the 'immigrant' from history. The universals proposed by the political and cultural forms of nation precisely generate the critical *acts* that negate those universals" (9).

increasingly difficult and possibly unrewarding choice of giving up racial ties. Finally, these texts also, through their interpretation of the promise of education, obviate the process of interpellation that follows from their experiences in the institutions of America.

Like Pinky, the second generation Mexican American and the Nisei protagonists of Paredes and Sone's texts, respectively, are poised to take on the promise of the American Dream.[106] They are educated, middle-class (or nearly), and career-bound. They have been socialized in American schools, they have been exposed to the values and founding principles of the nation, and they attempt to achieve the full promise of inclusion and prosperity. These texts, as Lowe suggests, challenge the myths of American pluralism, but they do it by placing their characters in what seem like the most deserving places in order to show the challenges of the promise and also to show the inherent dilemma for the racial subject in this position. American inclusion is supposedly based on the espousal of American values, and yet in this era it is only ethnic Europeans who are melding into the white mainstream. Thus, when writers place their minority protagonists in line to assimilate to the (white) American system, challenging white

[106] It is important to note here that the status of immigrant is often misapplied to people of Mexican descent living in the United States. As Renato Rosaldo writes, "Paredes, I tried to explain, was not an immigrant. His Mexican ancestors never moved; instead, the border itself had moved, through conquest. He grew up in what had become south Texas, close to the border, in the region that was his ancestral homeland. He was forced to live, as his ancestors were not, under a dominant, aggressive group that spoke a language not his own, but they were the immigrants, not he. Not unlike the experiences of blacks and Native Americans, Chicano history cannot readily be assimilated to a tale of immigration and displacement" (68). Paredes's protagonist, does not see himself as second-generation, but I use this designation to denote that he is the first American citizen in his family line. Ramón Saldívar writes, "Other types of national narratives constructed to provide the etiologies of identity, such as narratives of the immigrant experience, for instance, simply will not apply to the situation of such bordered, *trans*cultured subjects" (283).

supremacists practices of violence and oppression, they also challenge the process of interpellation into the system, and they expose the unfair nature of the mantra that all can be folded into the American mainstream. Pinky's underlying argument, for example, is that progress comes when you are white or aspire to be, but if you can only aspire to be you will never fully be white or welcomed into the mainstream – entry into the mainstream remains deferred, remains part of the progress narrative. The writers I examine here also, at times, reveal their protagonists' willingness or aspirations to give up cultural ties, accept persecution in the hopes of future acceptance, and lay out the conditions under which they will continue to believe in the promise of education, despite its inherent contradictions.

Though wartime unity and patriotism influence their narratives, Paredes and Sone ascribe a large part of their protagonists' understanding of how the American system should *ideally* work to their experiences in the American and Americanizing institution of the public school system and, additionally, in Sone's case, in the Internment camps themselves. The narratives they write are in large part about the way that the protagonists interpret the promise of education in America, namely, that it is a vehicle of assimilation/acculturation and that it is to facilitate a second generation immigrant's entry into mainstream America. As Lowe argues:

> In the United States, pluralism admits the existence of differences, yet it requires conformity to a public culture that tends to subordinate alternative cultures—not only racial and ethnic cultures but gay and lesbian cultures as well as

> working-class culture. The state apparatuses—schooling, communications media, the legal system—that assimilate immigrant individuals into citizenship are integral to the constitution of a state in which their racial and ethnic differences are silenced […]. (144)

In other words, the state apparatuses which are responsible for reproducing citizenship and the patriotism of its pupils demand a whiting out of ethnic and racial culture by their very exclusion of those cultures in their discourse of Americanism and even in their discourse of American pluralism. As Mario García reminds us in *Mexican Americans*, this process of subject formation spans cultures and backgrounds in the U.S.: "Mexican Americans […] shared certain common experiences with other Americans. These include aspirations and struggles for the full promises of the American dream as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution and as learned by every American schoolchild, whether in integrated schools or in segregated ones such as the Mexican schools of the Southwest" (8).[107] Sone and Paredes foreclose the early academic experiences of their protagonists in order to reveal their place in subject formation.

[107] Lowe, seeing the unique situation of Japanese Americans writes, "This impossibly binary demand [to assimilate unquestioningly and to repudiate Japanese cultural affiliations], encountered in different ways by the protagonists of all three novels [*Nisei Daughter*, *No-No Boy*, and *Obasan*], is not dissimilar to the predicament of many racialized minority peoples who face disenfranchisement unless they abandon their particular cultures to become citizens assimilated by way of a common culture. Yet for Japanese American and Japanese Canadian men and women, this process was coercively enforced through physical detention in the camps and for nisei [sic] men through the demand that they prove their patriotism by enlisting in the armed services to fight against Japan" (48).

Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation of is helpful here to illuminate how American/Americanizing institutions work in subject formation, often to create patriotic and loyal subjects. According to Althusser, the individual "*is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjugation*, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjugation 'all by himself.' *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection*" (qt. in Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative* 68-9, italics in original). In other words, a school, as a non-coercive institution,[108] does not demand loyalty, but influences the subject such that they would choose patriotism "freely." At the same time, this does not negate or dispel the potential for challenges to this "subjugation." As Lowe describes it:

> Interpellation suggests that ideologies function through the subject, though it is defined as not accounting for the totality of subjective practice—that is, interpellation contains something akin to the psychoanalytic notion of splitting, but where psychoanalysis figures this splitting metaphorically as the 'castration' of the subject upon entering language and social relations, in interpellation, this division is figured otherwise as a tension between an ideological demand for identification and the contradictory material conditions within which that demand is made. (145-46)

[108] "As Antonio Gramsci has argued, society is made up of voluntary affiliations, like schools, unions, churches, and families that are noncoercive in their attempt to create a social whole, and of state institutions, like the police force, armies, and central bureaucracies, whose role is direct domination (1971, 257-63)" (Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative* 24).

Given Sone and Paredes's focus on the disparity between ideal Americanness and the lived realities of their protagonists, interpellation in the American school system plays a prominent role in each text. At the same time, the "splitting" (or "splitting off") of the subject is necessarily created in their protagonists as they encounter the demand to give up their racial selves in favor of a white ideal, all in a society that bases privilege on whiteness. And yet, given the fact that, as Lowe puts it, "Imaginary identifications furnish the effects of pleasure that may be exploited by a state apparatus to enlist subjects in its operations and to dissuade them from active political resistance and antagonism" (151), the protagonists find themselves, in this era before the civil rights movements, in an untenable position via the American mainstream and the racial community.

In both Paredes and Sone, the American school system is figured as a vehicle for the promise that education will result in mainstream acceptance. At the same time, they show how their characters are split between the promises offered in schools and by American institutions, and the legacies and histories of their own racial and ethnic communities. Lowe describes the process of interpellation in schools as one where the "narrative that privileges the elite subject of a 'prior' Western civilization" directly results in the "voiceless invisibility imposed on students of color in the classroom produced by the narrative" (38). As John Morán González reminds us in *Border Renaissance*, at the time of the Texas Centennial (1936) Texas history was taught in schools with a particularly racist bent. He writes, "The Centennial fundamentally

reshaped the general representational contours of modern Texas, articulating what had been a commonly assumed yet loosely coordinated ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority into a coherent popular historical narrative of Anglo-Texan progress" (32). And yet, as Lowe sees it, this silencing of the minority subject through an emphasis on white supremacy may be "precisely the ground from which antiracist, feminist, and class struggles against those nationalist dominations necessarily emerge" (58). This idea of the unfixed subject prompts Ramón Saldívar, in *Borderlands of Culture*, to suggest that the system of Americanization in the schools comes up against the Mexican traditions from the home and community and that neither wins out completely. He writes:

> These double Mexican and American culture systems each acquire within their own spheres a presumed priority by virtue of their apparent production of a formed subject. However, this subject is then also taken to be an active causal agent, itself willfully capable of producing and reproducing the effects of both the American ideological and Mexican folkloric configurations within which its own singular fate is said to evolve. (165)

Thus, without recommending the binary of cultural nationalism versus assimilation, Saldívar rightly suggests agency on the part of the subject who is interpellated by (oftentimes) opposing cultural forces. Again, Paredes and Sone explore the difficulties faced by their protagonists who negotiate between two cultures and determine the possibilities of giving up one or the other via allegiance to American and Americanizing institutions.

Finally, it is important for my discussion here to note how both civilian and military administrators of the Internment camps saw Internment as an opportunity to Americanize its subjects; subjects deemed "un-assimilable" by the very fact of their mass imprisonment.[109] As Howard puts it, "More than detainment, the World War II incarceration of 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent represented a highly coordinated if contested ideological campaign to Americanize a particular ethnic minority group, to 'rehabilitate' the prisoners, as their keepers termed it" (172). Howard also writes that "A 1943 subcommittee report on the WRA concluded that camps represented 'an almost unparalleled opportunity to inaugurate a vigorous educational program for positive Americanism'" (155). Thus, while all public schools can be considered places of patriotic indoctrination, evidence suggests that camp schools (designed for both young and old prisoners) intensified this process. Ngai points out that "in the areas deemed most important for citizenship construction—work, schooling, and self-government—WRA policy was pointedly assimilationist" (179). She also writes of the War Relocation Authority, "Ever optimistic about the potential of mass social engineering, they envisioned the camps as 'planned communities' and 'Americanizing projects' that would speed the assimilation of Japanese Americans through democratic self-government, schooling, work, and other rehabilitative activities (177). Finally, as Caroline Chung Simpson writes in *Absent Presence*, "The camps were organized as

[109] These subjects were thought to be more assimilable if they upheld certain beliefs. As Howard writes, "inmates were subjected to *indoctrination* ('rehabilitation') through Americanization and Christianization campaigns and *inquisition* ('registration') via lengthy questionnaires and loyalty hearings" (14).

model American communities, complete with a rigorous program of public works, agriculture, and manufacturing […]" (153). Just as Mexican Americans and other Americans experienced the push toward mainstream ways of thinking, so too did Japanese Americans both during and before the Internment experience. As the evidence suggests, however, this process of "Americanization" was intensified as Japanese and Japanese Americans made a captive audience while interned.

Paredes and Sone do not shy from depicting both the prevalence of racism and the violence of the forced movements of peoples. It is important, in these narratives of American life set in the atmosphere of the Second World War, that Paredes and Sone critique American practices in regards to racial, gender, and class discrimination. Because they are written and set in periods where American exceptionalism was the spirit of the times and American hegemony was on the verge of global dominance (provided the U.S. could get its race problems under control), writing the violence of racism into their narratives further binds these narratives to the spirit of the times. These authors rework the pluralist ideal vision of American democracy, especially as it is being broadcast and memorialized through wartime and postwar propaganda and in the schools their characters attend. Behind both of these texts is the assertion that the U.S. is supposed to be a tolerant, diverse nation that grants freedoms and rights to all of its citizens. And yet, this version of tolerance requires a whiting out of cultural, social, racial and ethnic values to be replaced by pat patriotism and a gradualist perspective on desegregation. As they engage the notion that one must give up their racial or ethnic

ties in order to be accepted by mainstream America, their inclusion of the violence of racism and discrimination already reflects back onto and inherently alters the naïve assertion that the U.S. is the most tolerant nation in the world.

While neither Paredes nor Sone treat their narratives as a chronicle of injustice, they both point to the effects that the racial policies of the country, from immigration policy to Internment, have on the lived experiences of their characters. This reveals that while racism is often practiced by individuals, it is supported and upheld by larger systems of white supremacy. In other words, these texts show how national policy works against racial minorities, despite the prevalence and frequency of its claims to democracy, tolerance, and freedom. In the wartime and postwar atmosphere of patriotism and unity, racial tolerance was touted as a U.S. imperative. As the lawyer's speech in *Pinky* illustrates, in order to be considered a free democracy both globally and nationally, the U.S. had to prove that they could be racially tolerant and that their society could show evidence of progress. This "progress" would be evidenced when the minority subject adopted and adapted to white mainstream norms. In other words, the film does not rail against Jim Crow, lynching, or the widespread oppression of African Americans, because that would be a direct attack on the larger structures of white supremacy. Instead, by focusing on individuals, the film – as well as countless other films and government propaganda directives – avoids a direct challenge to its own system of racial oppression.

Education was touted as both a route to progress and as progress itself. When Pinky proves that the black women she teaches can all become registered nurses, presumably the white gatekeepers would overcome their own prejudice and allow the individual racial subject to enter the mainstreams of culture and economic advancement. The American school system would impart American values and make "Americans" out of the children of immigrants. Yet, when it comes to racial minorities, this process gets trickier. Peoples of Mexican and Japanese descent in the U.S. were often not viewed as citizens, even when born and raised in the U.S. Laws, immigration, and local social practices kept these subjects out of the mainstream, despite many adapting to and adopting American ways. As Sone and Paredes write their works, they are aware of both the promise of American tolerance and the realities of American prejudice. Both authors place their subjects in the American school system and both show how their protagonists go through a process of whiting-out their racial backgrounds. In the process, both the protagonists and the authors have their own varying interpretation of the promise of American education. The level of success or failure of their protagonists, measured in the final pages of each narrative, is where the nature of their critique of this system lies. Their protagonists represent apt and at least partially willing candidates for Americanization; the critique manifests in where this Americanization fails them, leaving them dually segregated – from their communities and from the mainstream – in the American landscape.

Splitting and Slitting Off: The Subjects of Education in *George Washington Gómez*

George Washington Gómez is a story that takes places near the fictional border town of Jonesville-on-the-Grande. Beginning with the birth of the protagonist, the story follows his family as his uncle, Feliciano (his guardian because his father, Gumersindo, was shot by Texas Rangers), begins a new life in a new town. Feliciano becomes prosperous and melds into the political and social life of the town, while George, known throughout his childhood as Guálinto, begins his formal and informal education. Guálinto is a great student and excels in school; he has been the hope of his family since his birth, and they have high expectations for his success as a "leader of his people" or a "great man among Gringos" (16).[110] As Paredes writes, "He was greatly intelligent, gifted, and destined for wonderful things. His family's mission in life was to give him every opportunity possible to their limited means" (125). Alternately labeled a bildungsroman and a *corrido* border ballad by critics,[111] *George Washington Gómez* chronicles how Guálinto moves from a patriotic child to a radical and rebellious teen to a conforming college-educated adult (when he adopts a third name, George G. Gómez).

Ameríco Paredes is famous for his nonfiction and fiction alike and is a founding scholar on border ballads, or *corridos*, and has shaped much of Chicano and border studies in the academy. He is praised as a founding member of the Chicano movement

[110] See my discussion below.

[111] See Leif Sorensen, who writes, "As the novel progresses, the corrido comes to determine the shape of Guálinto's fantasy life while the bildungsroman shapes his progression through the educational system. Paredes's novel dramatizes this process, showing how such an internalization of a residual script of resistance turns to serve dominant ends" (222).

as well as heralded for his resistant scholarship.[112] *George Washington Gómez*, as Leif Sorensen puts it, is a "foundational text of pre-Chicano-movement Mexican American literature" (111). Ramón Saldívar has argued that "In *George Washington Gómez*, we thus have a prefigurative instance of the state of Chicano literature and the Chicano subject at the end of the twentieth century ("Borderlands" 274). Much critical attention is paid to the presence of dual cultures – American and border Mexican – in *George Washington Gómez*. Christopher Schedler calls the work a hybrid between the *corrido* and Anglo-American modernism and concludes that "Inscribing and deconstructing the aesthetic tradition of the heroic *corrido*, Paredes develops a form of Mexican-American modernism to depict a new period of linguistic and ideological—rather than armed—cultural conflict to represent the pluralistic identity of an emerging Mexican-American middle-class subject" (172). Paredes's place as a border artist is reflected in his work as well as in his critical reception; writing about several cultures – American, Mexican, and border culture – Paredes's novel is viewed as seminal to hybridity and border studies.

At the same time, critics heavily focus on what they see as the dual naming of the protagonist. Known both a George and Guálinto, critics suggest that Paredes's protagonist is an embodiment of duality or hybridity. Sorensen writes that "Paredes's novel registers this skepticism in the divided subjectivity of its protagonist, which is manifested in the tension between the Americanization encoded in his given name and

[112] For more on how Paredes's career influences the reception of his literary work, see my discussion of *Pocho* in my chapter 3. For more on Paredes's career, see Ramón Saldívar's *The Borderlands of Culture*.

the counterdiscourse of indigenism that coalesces around his nickname, Guálinto" (116-7). Ramón Saldívar also suggests that *George Washington Gómez* is a "borderlands version of Du Boisian double consciousness" and so "priority cannot be easily assigned to one or the other [of his personalities] because of the constant give-and-take between the normative impulses of the one versus the even more normative qualities of the other's everyday speech" (*Borderlands* 164). This "double consciousness," critics argue, is a realization of the process of interpellation. Héctor Pérez writes that "For most of the novel, [Guálinto] is the identifying name the protagonist uses. Because of the weight of the importance of the name—in terms of its ties to indigenous roots versus a more European Spanish name or even the Anglo 'George' which he chooses to use in the novel's later chapters—one can say that the protagonist is interpellated by his name" (34).[113] What critics seem to overlook, however, is that the protagonist has three names: George Washington Gómez, Guálinto Gómez, and George G. Gómez (the G. standing for Garcia, his mother's maiden name). Nonetheless, the push and pull of influences in Guálinto/George's life are battled out in his character and the one with the most influence at any given time is reflected in the name he uses.

Critics also focus a lot of attention on the final manifestation of the protagonist as George G. Gómez and whether or not he manifests an assimilated subject. Paredes begins the final section of the novel, "Leader of his People," with George dreaming of

[113] Sorensen writes, "My use of two different names in my description of these two different identifications reflects my sense that, paradoxically, both interpellations succeed, producing two subjects in one body" (120).

defending Mexico from encroaching Anglos and changing the course of history. We also learn at the beginning of this section that George has completed college and married a white woman and daydreams about how Anglo-Saxon his children will look. Yet, in reading this scene, most critics focus on the subconscious return of George's high school militancy. Christopher Schedler argues that "Even the apparently unified 'American' identity that George G. Gómez projects at the end of the novel remains problematic in the wake of his recurring dream of fighting against both Mexican and American forces for a republic of the Southwest" (172). Ramón Saldívar argues:

> these 'daydreams' fuel a decidedly discomfiting 'primal,' utopian self-formation that stands against the one that he has consciously 'chosen' under the various signs of his interpellation. That is to say, the fantasy structures of the unconscious return, bringing a historical memory that has the practical function of designating an alternative, even if deeply latent and tenuous, content to the formed subject of history. (287)[114]

José David Saldívar, on the other hand, views the ending as one where George is fully assimilated. He writes, "we can say without exaggeration that Parades's modernist novel is precisely about the large and small dislocations in space that must occur before, at novel's end, the hero George G. Gómez can completely assimilate. And that place is precisely located by Paredes at the center of competing local, national, and

[114] Sorensen writes, "But his assimilation into the national body is not a seamless fit: his unconscious life is filled with dreams and reveries in which he fights to ensure that 'Texas and the Southwest will remain forever Mexican'" (111).

international interests, spanning the hemisphere" (*Border* 41). But does assimilation occur when the minority takes on the beliefs and behaviors of the dominant society or does it happen when the dominant society welcomes the "converted" subject? When, for example, does it happen in *Pinky*? If *George Washington Gómez* offers an interpretation of the promise of education, then it must indeed interpret whether or not the promise is fulfilled on both ends.[115]

Critics rightly point out the historical circumstances at the time that he novel was written and how these might have influenced Paredes's final characterization of his protagonist. As Pérez puts it, "More than a case of unrealistic expectations on the part of Guálinto's parents—María's conviction that her son is destined to greatness and Gumersindo's insistence that his son grow up without hate—Guálinto is a test case of historically unrealized hopes" (37). These "unrealized hopes" reflect what is seen as the "failure" of assimilation in the wider Chicano movement. Parikh writes, "This narrative, conceived during a moment in which minorities were by and large barred from access to the institutions of higher education, accordingly imagines the university as a site wherein the minority subject is inculcated into the dominant national culture" (268). At the same time, Ramón Saldívar, in *Borderlands of Culture*, argues that "When the force of realpolitik in the 1940s among middle-class Mexican Americans was assimilation,

[115] José David Saldívar provocatively asks, "But why does Paredes trace his hero's cultural genealogy to the leader of both revolutionary and republican America? Does he want to suggest that his character's rhetoric of descent (simultaneously a rhetoric of ascent and consent) is central to the dynamics of cohesion in America? Will his brown hero's future lead a new republic replete with mythic past and 'manifest' destiny? Materially hybrid and heteroglot, *George Washington Gómez* reexamines—ironically as the title suggests—the decline of the *corrido*'s heroic age and the rise of ethnogenesis on the border" (*Border* 43).

Paredes's hero could not act differently if he wanted to remain true to his newly chosen class allegiance" (183). Thus, Paredes is exploring in detail the most accessible point of access to mainstream acculturation available at this time to peoples of Mexican descent in America: education. For a Mexican American population, as Ramón Saldívar points out, "by choosing assimilation, Guálinto might in fact be best positioning himself to become what his parents originally desired for him, 'the leader of his people'" (183). Here, Paredes shows how George may be following the example set by LULAC. As González tells us, "In keeping with its emphasis on individualism as part of the Americanization process, LULAC construed all community progress as proceeding through individual success in education" (105). Yet, by assimilating on white American terms, Paredes shows that George ultimately fails in both the white and Mexican communities.[116]

As Ramóm Saldívar has pointed out, Paredes's work can be read as exposing how interpellation works in the character of George/Guálinto. Guálinto, as an innocent baby, is already exposed to the demands of the world around him. Paredes writes, "Born a foreigner in his native land, he was fated to a life controlled by others. At that moment his life was being shaped, people were already running his affairs, but he did not know it. Nobody considered whether he might like being baptized or not. Nobody had asked him whether he, a Mexican, had wanted to be born in Texas, or whether he had wanted

[116] "In the end," writes Ramón Saldívar "he rationalizes with an awesomely serene lack of self-consciousness that the circumstances of modernity and modernization on the border are such that the only pragmatic pathway available to someone like him is full assimilation and the complete negation of the past, an attempted forgetting of history with a vengeance" (187).

to be born at all" (15). Guálinto thus becomes a product of his environment, "fated" to be controlled and manipulated by the visions, desires, and limitations of others. The question of fate becomes important given that the story (tragically) fates Guálinto to abandon his community in an attempt to assimilate. Paredes, in this passage, shows how all facets of the child's life push and pull him in their desired direction, creating a split subject for interpellation. One of the first sites of cultural pull that Paredes focuses on is his parents (including his father, Gumersindo, who named him; his mother, María; and his Uncle Feliciano, who helped raise him when his father died). In a much discussed passage, María and Gumersindo decide to name the baby after George Washington. María says, "I would like my son […] I would like him to have a great man's name. Because he is going to grow up to be a great man who will help his people" (16). Gumersindo follows this with, "My son […] He is going to be a great man among the Gringos […] A Gringo name he shall have!" (16). Here we see immediately how Guálinto's life begins to be shaped by his parents and yet, at the same time, there already exists a contradiction or a confusion in the goal that his parents express. María says he will be great and lead his people. Gumersindo says he will be great among whites. These are two very different goals, yet we see how education becomes the vehicle for achieving "greatness" as "whiteness" in America.

While Paredes does not create a blank slate for the American education system to mark up, he does focus a lot of attention on the process of Americanization as it takes place through Guálinto's primary and secondary education. After Gumersindo's death,

Feliciano and María push Guálinto toward the somewhat undefined goal[117] of being a great man among his people and/or among whites. The path they envision to accomplish this purpose is one of education. Both María and Feliciano groom Guálinto to take pride in education and to work hard at it. When Guálinto starts school, María tells him, "'Remember to act nice,' she said. 'Be a gentleman. Stay away from those hoodlums you like to play with. Obey. Be sure to do what you are told. I don't want any complaints from the *profesora* about a son of mine. And above all, don't fight'" (107). Feliciano, a little less dramatically, simply tells Guálinto, "Just do what she [Miss Cornelia, the teacher] says and everything will be all right" (110). Inadvertently or intentionally, both Feliciano and María place a high value on education and see it as the route to Guálinto's greatness. They also see little contradiction between their cultural expectations for Guálinto and the education he receives. María trusts the school system so thoroughly that "[she] had established an inflexible rule. If they were punished at school for any reason, they would be punished again when they got home" (125). Feliciano, at the same time, works for years to save enough money to keep Guálinto in school and to eventually send him to college. He thinks, "Guálinto would have to be a

[117] Later in the text Paredes explains just how confusing this goal is and, yet, how much it is adhered to by his family: "In a way it was his family's fault that Guálinto had so much trouble with Miss Cornelia. His mother, his uncle, and even Carmen had come to take it for granted that he would grow up to be a great man as his dead father had wished. A great man who would help and lead his people to a better kind of life. How this would be accomplished they did not know. Sometimes they thought he would be a great lawyer who would get back the lands they had lost. At other times they were certain he would become a great orator who would convince even the greatest of their enemies of the rightness of his cause. Or perhaps he would be a great doctor who would go around healing the poor and thus create an immense following. They had these and many other dreams about him and sometimes disagreed as to which would be the right one. But they agreed that he was not just another boy (125).

learned man in order to help his people. How he would help them Feliciano had no idea, but he knew he must give the boy as much education as he could" (49). Thus, even though Feliciano has María teach Guálinto the Spanish alphabet before he attends classes, and even though Feliciano cannot himself feel comfortable standing below the American flag when registering Guálinto for school, and, finally, even though María takes great offense when a teach assumes she does not know who George Washington is (108-09, 136), their trust in the American public school system – not just Guálinto's experience in the school system itself – facilitates to a high degree Guálinto's Americanization.

The sentiment that Guálinto not only will, but must do well in school in order to help his people is so often repeated in the text that it becomes almost farcical. Paredes writes, "Gumersindo's words, spoken once playfully and again as he lay dying, took an almost religious significance for Feliciano and María, a momentousness that grew with the years […]" (155). Because the goal is so "momentous" and yet undefined, the child is somewhat at the will of his teachers – their sense of greatness and achievement (in this case, defined largely by white standards and set by white teachers), as Paredes suggests, will rub off on the impressionable child that knows his worth, perhaps, but has yet to find direction. At one point Guálinto thinks, "Finish school and go to college, be somebody so you can help your people. That was all he ever heard" (257). The heroic quest that Guálinto is set to loses what little specificity it had over the years and instead

seems to revolve only around education; an education that, as far as text books go, is largely pro-white and anti-Mexican.

Guálinto shows reverence for and a dedication to education. Paredes illustrates this in his description of Guálinto getting his first school book: "Guálinto took the book with trembling hands. His first school book. A thin little book with stiff cardboard and cloth covers. It shone in the light as Alicia handed it to him, the white line of the leaf edges in immaculate contrast to the brightly painted green and gold covers. Guálinto took it as if it were made of fine glass" (120). Even after Guálinto had had some years in school, Paredes tells us, "And in truth, Guálinto loved school and was looking forward to it" (151). Guálinto thus values education as much as his family pushes him and expects him to. Yet, Paredes does not take this dedication and create an easily Americanized subject. His picture of Guálinto and of the school system is more complex than that and yet, I argue, Guálinto eventually falls sway to the mainstream thinking imparted by public institutions. As Crystal Parikh points out, "There is a recognition by all those of his community that Gualinto [sic] must attain the symbolic and cultural capital that will legitimize him as a 'leader of his people,' but the process by which he will secure these privileges, which are in turn meant to be reinvested into the community, also gives birth to the 'traitorous' Anglo-American George" (267). Thus, I argue, that going into the pro-white Texan public school system with high expectations but undefined goals, allows the school system to influence Guálinto in such a way that eventually creates an embrace of

mainstream white culture and a distancing from the Mexican border culture of his family and friends.[118]

As Paredes interprets the promise and the nature of an American education, he also reveals the complex process of interpellation in Guálinto's primary and secondary education, he sees a dual pull on Guálinto: one stemming from the American mainstream as presented in school books and lessons, and one stemming from his own understanding of the history and culture of the Mexican and Mexican American people he grows up with. Corroborating much of the critical reception of the work, Paredes suggests that Guálinto developed two selves – one created in school and "American" and one created at home or at play and "Mexican." Paredes writes, "Consciously he considered himself a Mexican. He was ashamed of the name his dead father had given him, George Washington Gómez. He was grateful to his Uncle Feliciano for having registered him in school as 'Guálinto' and having said that it was an Indian name" (147). At the same time, Paredes writes, "But there was also George Washington Gómez, the American. He was secretly proud of the name his more conscious twin, Guálinto, was ashamed to avow publicly. George Washington Gómez secretly desired to be a full-fledged, complete American without the shameful encumberment of his Mexican race" (147-48). These shifting allegiances between his "American" and his "Mexican" self

[118] Ramón Saldívar, in *Borderlands of Culture*, writes, "The narrator of the novel, then, would have us see Guálinto's identity and formation as a subject as an effect of an immense network of causal strands that includes the state public school and its lists of required readings" (162).

reflect the contradictions that the Americanizing educational system creates by teaching with a white bias to students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Paredes suggests that there is "democracy" in the classroom but also racism in the institutional system that supports it. Paredes shows how, the "earnest young" teacher "from up north […] entertaining some ideas of equality and justice" can come down to Texas and "In her classes at least, democracy exits. There, often enough, the Mexicotexan is first instead of last" and where she comes to represent "Justice, Equality, Democracy. The embodiment of all that is supposed to be good in the American people" (148, 150). With teachers like this teaching the laudable American values of tolerance, equality and freedom, Guálinto is able to view "Mildred Barton's class [as] a true democracy" where he can believe, as he was taught by his family to, "that he was better than most people. That the class was composed largely of Anglos did not hurt his chances in the least" (158). Here, Paredes highlights aspects of Guálinto's education that create in him a sense of belonging and rightness within the system. He even finds that questioning the textbooks is valued by his teachers, even though "The teacher cannot criticize a textbook on Texas history. She would be called a Communist and lose her job" (150). And yet, while the protagonist may feel the democratic nature of the classroom, the narrator points out the contradictions exposed when you move beyond the walls of the classroom. Of the imaginary northern teacher and her imaginary Mexican student, Paredes writes, "She teaches him that we are all created equal. And before he knows it the little Latin is thinking in English, and he can feel infinitely dirty if he forgets to brush

his teeth in the morning" (149). Here Paredes shows the insidiousness of racism inherent in the supposed democracy of the "English only" classroom and how it moves out into the domestic sphere and into ideas of the self.

Democracy in the classroom, at the same time, does not, for the narrator, equal democracy in the educational system. In describing the double-class system, the narrator tells us that the first and second grades were separated into "high" and "low" levels and that "Low first and low second served the great majority of entering pupils, who were of Mexican origin and knew little or no English when they got to school" (116). And that "High first and high second accepted those children fortunate enough to know the English language before they entered school, and who for religious or economic reasons were not sent to the private schools run by the Catholic church" (116). The terms "high" and "low" correspond in this case to the placement of whites and Mexican Americans on the racial hierarchy. In interpreting the educational promise, a subject could easily discern that "high" and "white" are the preferred terms. The narrator goes on to tell us that this system was essentially meant to reduce the number of Mexican students going through to the higher grades: "It was a process of not-quite-so-natural selection, and it did wonders for the school budget, while the few Mexicans who made it through high school did so by clawing their way to the top" (117). Again, Paredes highlights the institutional structure that sanctions discrimination and limits

even the small good that a well-intentioned educator can accomplish.[119] This structural inequality is a well-documented fact of the Texas school system. Patrick Carroll, in *Felix Longoria's Wake*, states that "Dual school systems that operated in South Texas after the war served to decrease, rather than increase, Mexican American students' educational opportunities" (34).[120] Paredes highlights the difficulty that even a student with good grades, writing and reading skills, and a supportive family faces in light of a prejudiced system designed to weed out children of Mexican descent.

Finally, despite Guálinto being proud of both American and Mexican histories and heroes, Paredes interprets the promise of education, so promoted by María and Feliciano, as a form of patriotic indoctrination that does violence to the racial subject:

> In school Guálinto/George Washington was gently prodded toward complete Americanization. But the Mexican side of his being rebelled. Immigrants from Europe can become Americanized in one generation. Guálinto, as a Mexicotexan, could not. Because, in the first place, he was not an immigrant come to a foreign land. Like other Mexicotexans, he considered himself part of the land on which his ancestors had lived before the Anglotexans had come. And because, almost a

[119] Sorensen writes, "This policy promotes a racialized model of academic achievement that, unlike outright segregation, shifts responsibility for the absence of Mexican American students in the higher grades onto the students themselves. Paredes's narrative undermines the naturalness of this order by calling attention to the institutional practices that underwrite it when the narrative points out that these policies 'did wonders for the school budget' (117)" (218).

[120] This claim is backed up by Zaragosa Vargas, in *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, where he points out that "A study of the 1942-43 Texas school year revealed that a little over half (53 percent) of the state's Tejano children were enrolled or attended school on a regular basis" (207).

> hundred years before, there had been a war between the United States and Mexico, and in Texas the peace had not yet been signed. (148)

Paredes thus specifically locates Guálinto's development in an environment of conflicting ideologies and points out that, while there are two forces pulling him in presumably opposite directions, there is no clear path toward the attainment of "Americanness" or assimilation, since the path laid out for racial and ethnic minorities (one of immigrant assimilation) is, according to Paredes, not possible for those who are not immigrants (and who are not racially white). As González writes, "Anglo-Texans customarily, and sometimes violently, refused to recognize Texas-Mexican membership in the imagined community of Texas and the United States, treating Texas Mexicans as foreigners, even those who came from a family of many generations' standing in the state" (12). Paredes highlights how these attitudes about Mexican American "foreignness" come up against the ideal of immigrant assimilation. Yet, despite this knowledge, Paredes positions his character as assimilated in the final chapters. By describing the route as untenable, Paredes foreshadows that the realization of "mainstream acceptance" will also be untenable.

Another aspect of the text that foreshadows the failure of Guálinto's attempt at assimilation is the ways in which federal, state, and local policy combine to support racist practice. Beyond the education system itself, these practices ripple out into his daily life. At a climactic moment of the text, three of Guáinto's high school friends are denied entrance to a "Mexican" restaurant because they are of Mexican descent. This

incident highlights the social and economic dimensions of racial stratification, as well as its absurdity. María Elena, a classmate and love interest of Guálinto's, and Guálinto are told they are allowed in and so are Jimmy and Bob Shigemara, wealthy Japanese American classmates (who enjoy their only mention in the text pertaining to this scene). María Elena and Guálinto are told they can go in because they have a light complexion and are thus "Spanish," whereas the Japanese men are let in because they are wealthy. Given the timing of this book (written between 1936 and 1940) and the short span before Japanese Americans become highly suspect in America, it is not surprising that Paredes should choose Japanese for the ancestry of these men. By the time of writing, Japan would have already invaded China (1937) and U.S. suspicions would have already been up. Here, I believe, Paredes is showing the subtle connection between U.S. national policy and race as well as the tenuous nature of privilege as conferred to racial subjects in America – the Japanese can go from being a privileged Asian nation to being the "enemy within," and Guálinto's Mexicanness can become Spanish at the whim of a bouncer (dressed as a Mexican bandito). Paredes's interpretation of the shifting nature of racism – where Japanese exclusion is soon to come, and Mexican Americans will soon fight in the armed forces as "white" men – connects larger U.S. trends to local settings, with the resulting understanding that the promise of assimilation can be upheld or denied at the whim of the majority.

This incident also serves to express how de facto segregation is locally determined and capable of being transcended on a case-by-case basis. At the same

time, it awakens Guálinto's sense of justice and creates a sense of solidarity between him and the three classmates who were denied entrance. Unlike Pinky, Guálinto refuses to be considered white, even when offered the chance. Pinky, by contrast, makes her decision to pass based on a train conductor mistaking her for white. Here Guálinto sacrifices his love for María Elena by staying "Mexican," whereas later in the text (discussed below) he aspires to have blonde and blue-eyed children with his white wife, distances himself from his Mexican upbringing, and changes his name to suit his racist white father-in-law. That Guálinto is offered the choice in an early indication that the racist power structure and its local iterations are asking racial subjects to deny their heritage and adopt white European models and behaviors. In this case, as later in the text, it would have been done at the expense of his three friends and for the acquisition of romance.

Despite the fact that Guálinto, in his youth, stands up for peoples of Mexican origin in the classroom and defends their right to enter restaurants, Paredes sends him off the college and has him return to Jonesville-on-the-Grande as an assimilated government employee going by the name George G. Gómez. As González sees it, "After a childhood spent vigorously championing Texas-Mexican dignity, Guálinto betrays his community's hopes by adopting the racist Anglo-Texan disdain for everything Mexican" (25). Indeed, George comes back and immediately tries to distance his white wife from his mother and family, characterizes his former friends' nascent political ambitions as

child-like, and flatly insults Mexican peoples and implies that they belong in the fields if they cannot get themselves out of them.

Paredes offers a precedent for this turn to whiteness in his descriptions of the disadvantages faced by people of Mexican descent in America. The Great Depression, referred to as "La Chilla"[121] by characters in Paredes's text, creates major hardships for those given the least advantage to begin with. Paredes focuses a large section on how various peoples of Mexican descent get treated by bosses, employment agencies, and border patrol. Already predominantly given the lowest paying jobs, Paredes's Mexican characters are paid even less and given even less opportunity during La Chilla. An employment agent, after speaking with a job applicant, says to herself, "These damn greasers! They get snootier and lazier everyday. Worse than niggers. That one there was too good for picking cotton. I don't see why we waste tax money sending them to school. Taking the bread out of white people's mouths, these damn cheap politicians. Anything for a vote" (196). This incident not only shows clear privilege for whites and a preference for placing Mexicans in the field and not in an office, but also indicates that this is institutionalized since this woman controls the job prospects for the man she is helping. Also, implicating politicians in the development of false hopes of minority subjects, the woman suggests that politicians only preach equality to get votes. Thus, as

[121] As Cida Chase writes, "'La Chilla' is the phrase characters in the novel use to comment on the slight value the Anglo authorities place on Mexican lives. 'Sugar is two cents a pound and men are two cents a dozen, Mexicans half-price. Flour costs a quarter a sack, and a quarter costs all of man's efforts and the little pride he has left. La Chilla.'" (From *George Washington Gómez* 195). *La chilla* also means poverty.

Guálinto himself has a hard time finding employment, he understands that the promises of education are often left unfulfilled for the racial subject. Paredes also highlights how Mexicans and Mexican Americans are used or abused based on the whims of the state. He writes, "The Mexicotexan has a conveniently dual personality. When he is called upon to do his duty for his country he is an American. When benefits are passed around he is a Mexican and always last in line" (195).[122] Interestingly, this passage reveals how the duality of the racial subject, part of their interpellation, is exploited by the racist power structure. Paredes deftly shows the hypocrisy created by a government and nation that promises equality, but delivers a stratified system that confers benefits based on racial hierarchies. By joining the military, Guálinto can get a jump on the process of assimilation via service to country.

As Paredes interprets it, the education system, while not strong enough to overcome his cultural pride at the restaurant, eventually convinces George that he could gain from bartering his racial ties for entry into the mainstream. George did everything right according to the immigration model of assimilation in America. His education and Feliciano's battle to put him through college represent the quintessential immigrant experience. Paredes crafted his protagonist to be well accepted by the mainstream, and yet George is not happy about his place in the world nor is he confident about his

[122] Paredes also highlights the unfair deportation of Mexican American citizens and Mexican nationals when they are no longer needed or wanted for work. Paredes tells the brief story of a man who is deported for having "no papers" after being in the country since 1915, on the invite of Mr. Estrong who was his employer (197). Referring back to World War I and presaging the post-World War II moment, Paredes points out that Mexican American citizenship only seems to count when needed for military service, and that that position does not back in civilian life.

assimilation. George expects that his assimilation will result in acceptance into the pluralist ideal America because he has done everything that the institution has asked besides change his racial makeup. When George thinks of his wife, Ellen, and their unborn child, he dreamily admires their Anglo features and imagines of his child that "He (it would be a he) would be blond and blue-eyed like his mother. The thought pleased him very much. It should also please his father-in-law, the old curmudgeon" (282). While George's appreciation for European features is not new, María Elena,[123] his high school love interest, is "Spanish" and not "Mexican," here it is expressed as a whiting out of his own progeny. In the assimilation model, this would be the end result of adopting white norms, yet his race is not so easily excised in the white world.[124]

Not only has he adopted the racist privileging for Anglo features, but he has also changed his name in order to be more easily accepted. When he meets Ellen's father he immediately tries to please him despite clear racial distain on the part of his father-in-law. His father-in-law is also a former Ranger (or *rinche*). Guálinto/George has had a conflicted relationship to the idea of the Ranger his whole life. Taught that they were heroes in school but enemies at home, the protagonist switches his allegiances depending on the situation.[125] He later learns that his father was killed by a Ranger, and yet still wants to please his father-in-law: "'George Washington Go-maize,' Ellen's father

[123] The approximation of the names "Ellen" and "Elena" also suggests a transferral – moving his desire for María Elean to a desire for the whiteness of Ellen.
[124] Like Pinky, one could read into this the suggestion that "blood will tell."
[125] A good example of this is when he if found to have lard in his hair at church and is made fun of. He storms off and imagines coming back as a *rinche* to enact revenge, until he remembers that Feliciano hates *rinches* and then imagines fighting against, instead of with, them (62-63).

said. 'They sure screwed you up, didn't they, boy? … You look white but you're a goddam Meskin. And what does your mother do but give you a nigger name. George Washington Go-maize'" (284). A few lines later Paredes writes, "It was then that he decided to legally change his name to George G. Gómez" (284). What Paredes shows here is that in both the racial appearance of his unborn child and in his own presentation of self, George desires to please and is willing to adapt to the white power structure, as represented by Ellen's father, a former Ranger and gatekeeper of culture. Yet, George drops the "Washington" in order to have his name sound less "black" and more "white," though now the "G" stands for Garcia, his mother's maiden name. By distancing himself from arguably the most despised race in America, George tries to please his father-in-law. And yet, in doing so, he retains the Mexican tradition of using both the father and the mother's surnames. It is a confusing moment, and one that critics overlook, yet it suggests two key elements of Paredes's interpretation of the assimilation process. First, by distancing himself from blacks, Paredes suggests that assimilation always requires an Other to distance oneself from – that some group will always be oppressed if acceptance in mainstream society is in any way conditional. In his history books, the national bias against African Americans would have been readily apparent. Second, Paredes has George subtly retain a link to his own mother, and therefore suggests that the assimilation is incomplete – desiring as he does a whitening of his progeny, George nonetheless cannot shake his racial make-up.

When George comes back to Jonesville-on-the-Grande he is disappointed. He feels that Washington made a mistake in sending him there: "he cursed the bureaucratic ineptitude of the people in Washington. He had been trained for almost three years for an assignment in southern California. And what did they do but send him down to the one place he should have stayed away from" (285).[126] In his disappointment we can read that he is not getting what he expects from Washington and that perhaps this is an indication that he is not fully accepted by the military establishment, where he is supposed to be considered "white." For George, like Pinky, fulfilling his civic and patriotic duty effectively means staying in his place without losing his ambitions or his drive to be "American." At the same time, George's anger at his people – he does not even invite his family to his wedding (284), he dreads the meeting of his mother and his wife (288), and he disparages his own nieces and nephews for having dark skin (285) – also indicates that he is not comfortable in the new (white) position he has taken on. By George's dissatisfaction we can read that "full assimilation" has not been accomplished and his race and the racial community he comes from cannot be washed white by his move into the mainstream.

Paredes does not picture George's assimilation as success, but instead focuses on the violence this assimilation does to family, community and self. George cannot negotiate with mainstream America, but feels he can only assimilate to the values laid

[126] Parikh argues that it is this moment where George has the highest potential to betray his own. She writes, "The anxiety that the minority insider might come to serve as a traitorous informant on his or her community is one commonly found in the texts of writers of color and often comes accompanied with a mandate to 'not tell'" (249).

out for him by the Americanizing institutions he has been part of. He attempts to abandon his roots and slip into the mainstream history-less and whitewashed. George's unconscious "regressions" – where he dreams of fighting for a republic of the Southwest – signify his own violent reprisal for his loss of self, remind readers of the inability to reject the past (either the personal past or a communal past), and further highlight that the (white) road to immigrant assimilation is untenable even for the most promising of subjects. Instead of characterizing George's assimilation as the inevitable result of exposure to American values and customs, Paredes pictures it as the violent disjoining of the two selves fostered by his two cultures. In other words, the critique lies in the fact that Americanization fails; mainstream acceptance does not allow George to retain his past nor does the racist social structure allow him to lose it, despite the promises of American democracy and the adoption of American values through the schools, George is doubly segregated. Like Pinky, he refuses to bond with his community and views its "unsuccessful" (or "lower class") members as part of a regrettable past. Also like Pinky, he is told by the white power structure, represented here by Washington and his ex-Ranger father-in-law, that he must return to this community, that he cannot transcend his racial make-up. Like Pinky, George cannot achieve "sameness" with whites, and must remain aware of his "difference." While George interprets his education as a trade off and as a step toward assimilation, the narrator and Paredes characterize it as a dual segregation.

Finally, Paredes's inclusion of the nascent political aspirations of George's former friends offers the opportunity for Paredes to define an alternative to the Americanization process (as attempted whitewashing) that George goes through. Because Elodia, Leytón, El Colorado and others are using the political system and want to encourage Mexican American citizens to vote, the promise of American inclusion and tolerance is still alive in these characters. Paredes writes, "'We're going to break O'Brien's hold on city politics, that's what,' Elodia said. 'Mike Osuna is our candidate for mayor and we have two other Mexicans on the ticket, Orestes and Enrique Leytón. For the first time Mexicans will have a say in city government" (292). These characters are not willing to give up their racial ties and they want to retain their dedication to their own people, but they are moving into the political sphere to try and affect change. Here, Paredes offers not only an alternative to George's assimilation process, but also a glimpse at the conditions under which a continued belief in the American system is possible from a minority subject position. Paredes takes us through the life of his protagonist, as he is more and more Americanized through the American school system, to show us the violence and damage that the attempt to wash white does to the racial subject.

The Return of the Oppressed: (Re)Educating the Interned in *Nisei Daughter*

Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* tells the story of Sone's childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, all which take place before the interment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast during WWII. Growing up in depression era

Seattle, Sone binds her story to American history and culture by aligning her life with historic events, American cultural experiences, and American schools. Sone then tells the story of the violence of displacement and imprisonment during the Internment and how she rebuilt herself when she was released from camp. *Nisei Daughter*, being an Internment narrative, directly connects national policy to the lived experiences of her characters. Sone offers a firsthand look at the process of Internment and how it affected her family and her community. Sone shows the violence of Internment not just in the resettlement process itself, but also in the military presence surrounding the camps.[127] Sone ends her narrative when her protagonist resettles in the East while her parents are still interned – an uneasy place to end a text, Sone nonetheless ends on a seemingly optimistic note.

Critics of *Nisei Daughter* alternately consider Sone's text a pro-assimilationist narrative or a resistant critique of U.S. government policy. As Warren Hoffman puts it, "Critics of *Nisei Daughter* tend to fall into one of two camps: (1) those who chastise Sone for her seeming espousal of white America and her championing of American assimilation; and (2) those who read the text as a subtle yet valiant protest against Americanization, a struggle that subverts a hegemonic understanding of literature, history, and memory" (230). Shirley Geok-lin Lim argues, for example, that this

[127] Of the presence of guards, Sone writes, "It was the first time I had seen a rifle at such close range and I felt uncomfortable. The rifle was presumably to quell riots, but contrarily, I felt riotous emotion mounting in my breast" (170).

assimilation takes place at the expense of the bond between (Japanese) mother and (American) daughter. She writes,

> Once Christian theology has transformed political, material reality to phantasms (denying physical imprisonment and racial prejudices which formed the experiences of Japanese Americans from 1942 to 1945 and affirming soul examination in their place), the narrator/daughter is able to erase the reality of the maternal presence, her Japanese blood, and transform her identity into a phantasm of American identity. ("Japanese" 297)

Lim envisions the result of this matricide as an alignment with whiteness and patriarchy. She concludes, "She is now in the same (patriarchal) system as 'the men in Washington' and speaks in the same language of democratic and individual idealism" ("Japanese" 299). Thus, according to Lim, the protagonist, through assimilation, is situated in the liberal idealistic vision of tolerance so prevalent in the postwar era. Conversely, Stephen Sumida argues, "*Nisei Daughter* runs against the grain of the assimilationist ideology that failed to dominate her, no matter that her readers today do not always note this point" (207). Sumida suggests that, instead of aligning herself with the dominant (white) ideology, the protagonist goes against that grain. He writes, "Her observation that she 'had never thought of Father and Mother as Japanese' is nothing less than her first intuiting of a concept of American cultural pluralism and her first questioning of the concept of assimilation" (211). These alternate readings highlight the fact that Sone's

text is bound to its historical time in either its assimilationist bent or in the subtly of its critique.[128]

Like *George Washington Gómez*, *Nisei Daughter* concerns itself with the "splitting" of the protagonist – into her Japanese and into her American self. Critics view this split as one that does violence to the Japanese half, while they are more or less unconcerned with what Kazuko views the violation of the American principles that she grew up learning. Several critics, for example, discuss the destruction of Japanese language books by Internment officials as a symbolic moment of the attempt to white-out Japanese culture in America. Lim writes, "Although the mother argues, 'there isn't one subversive word in it,' the American policy of destruction of Japanese writing rests on the acknowledgement of the power invested in a different language to subvert American identity" ("Japanese" 298). Lowe further suggests that "The destruction of Japanese-language books […] emblematizes the ways in which Japanese Americans were forced to internalize the negation of Japanese culture and to assimilate to Anglo-American majority culture during World War II" (49). Wolf D. Kindermann also writes that "Although she does not openly abandon her American identity, she feels upset by the mutilation of all things Japanese in her family when regulations passed by American authorities force them to burn all Japanese books and utensils even before Internment, whereas during the camp period her mother even has to give up her Japanese Bible"

[128] Sumida points out that "Sone wrote her autobiography in a time when terms for whatever it is that opposes accommodation were not yet devised except in ways considered most derogatory" (222). He also adds, "Sone protests against a definition of 'American' that excludes whoever is not white. Meanwhile, her definition of herself as an American is a specifically ethnic one" (210).

(263-64). Lim suggests that "The Christian instruction is non-Japanese; it moves the narrator/daughter from the untenable position of racial conflict to acceptance of the majority 'outlook' and so to her acceptance by the majority of white Americans" ("Japanese" 296).[129] Thus, regardless of their view on the assimilation goals of *Nisei Daughter*, critics reveal the violence done to Japanese culture in the form of book burning – something that the U.S. was accusing the Nazis of during WWII.

Monica's move east is considered by many to be the ultimate symbol of her endorsement of and her willingness to assimilate to the white American mainstream. In the final moment of the text, however, the narrator tells her readers that she has blended these dispirit halves into one self. Sone writes, "I was going back into its main stream, still with my Oriental eyes, but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and the American parts of me were now blended into one" (238). Whereas Elaine Kim argues that this blending is not successful, Wolf Kindermann argues that "In the end, before she moves even deeper into the land, she feels proud of being a Japanese-American with both heritages blended in her personality" (265, 264). Kindermann also suggests that Sone's work is "a document of Nisei female self-assertion and a legacy to coming generations" (265), even as he nonetheless points out the strains on the Japanese American community during and after the war and argues that "There is indeed ample

[129] Mrs. Itoi was already Christian when she arrived from Japan, however. Of this passage, Lim suggests, that Christian ideology participates in "The muting of rebellion, anger, and other socially unacceptable although psychologically understandable responses" to Internment ("Japanese" 296).

evidence that in order to survive Sone and her Nisei generation accepted the breakup of the Japanese-American community as a sacrifice, and left the Issei generation as fragments of a useless past" (264).[130]

Lisa Lowe perhaps most saliently attends to the identity issue in *Nisei Daughter*. She argues that the optimistic ending has a "false ring" due to the pressures to assimilate rather than maintain a Japanese *and* an American identity (49). She argues that Sone is responding to an "impossibly binary," as Lowe explains:

> Rather than a final synthesis which denies the damage of the internment or which reconciles the Japanese American subject divided by the 'enemy/not enemy' logic of the state, we can read the declaration of Japanese and American 'blending' as a manner of naming a continuing project of suspicion and survival as the nisei [sic] subject narrates the violence of a system that demands assimilation through internment, obligatory patriotism, and military service. (49-50)

Like Parades, Sone gives her main character several names in order to denote the levels of assimilation/acculturation that she experiences – the characters named Kazuko Itoi and Monica Sone, the text suggests, are potentially worlds apart and so have different names. Yet, as Lowe argues, this transition into assimilation needs to be further

[130] Kindermann adds, "Sone's book [...] reflected a new interest in Japanese-American reintegration after the internment of this group in War Relocation Camps after Pearl Harbor and a reconciliation with Japan after the 1951 peace treaty, which made Japan again a hopeful model of Asian democracy in contrast to Communist China, which, furthermore, confronted the United States in the Korean conflict" (259).

investigated. In my project, I look to the ways in which Sone interprets the process of education and internment in order to suss out whether the promises of inclusion and acceptance are indeed in earnest.

Unlike *George Washington Gómez*, Sone positions her character as American from the start. It is the reality of prejudice in America, the interment and its Americanizing goals, as well as her experience after the Internment that shifts her understanding of democracy in America as well as her negotiations with the prospect of becoming mainstream (again). It is the Internment, in other words, where Monica learns that the process of Americanization requires a whiting out of culture, something she did not consider in her early years where she felt comfortably American. In the oft quoted passage that begins the work, Kazuko[131] has just realized that she is Japanese: "The first five years of my life I lived in amoebic bliss, not knowing whether I was plant or animal, at the old Carrollton Hotel on the waterfront of Seattle. One day when I was a happy six-year-old, I made the shocking discovery that I had Japanese blood. I was a Japanese" (3). The way she finds this out is that she must attend Japanese school every day *after* attending American school. She considers this quite a disruption. Sumida aptly argues that "She could not in that instant consider the discovery [of her being Japanese] a refutation of her being an American, and she shows no fear of her own that she is somehow not American enough" (208). By positioning herself as American from the

[131] Here I use the child's given name that she goes by in the main part of the text of *Nisei Daughter*. After the Internment, when she moves east, she takes on the name Monica. Thus, much like Guálinto/George in *George Washington Gómez*, the child's name reflects ties to the racial community whereas the adult's name is more Anglo-European in nature.

beginning of the narrative, Sone highlights the social forces that coalesce to make her "Japanese" as well as "alien" in her own country.

Much of the early chapters of *Nisei Daughter* focus on just how American Kazuko's family is. Sone writes:

> Most of the time my life rolled by in pretty much the same fashion as it did for my yellow-haired, red-haired and brown-haired friends at grammar school. With them I enjoyed the national holidays—Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. But there were other times when things happened which could happen only to a Japanese. (66)

Here Sone expresses the patriotism of the child as well as the naturalness with which she treats her dual cultures. At the same time, based on the different hair colors, she suggests at least a potentially multiethnic makeup of her school friends. The descriptions that Sone offers of Kazuko's childhood home constantly reiterate the Americanness of her lifestyle. Kazuko tells us, "Although we acquired tastes for different types of food, we adhered mostly to a simple American menu" (13). She also spends a long time describing how American customs win out over Japanese ones when it comes to celebrating New Year's Eve.[132] Thus, the first chapters work to establish Kazuko and the Itoi family as practitioners of American culture. Kazuko also calls herself a Yankee

[132] See pages 81-83.

and a true native of Skidrow (18, 34).[133] Sumida argues that there is a situatedness implied in the very title of the work: "*nikkei*, *issei*, *nisei*, and *sansei*, a terminology and an ordinal numbering of generations which by itself unequivocally implies a continuing history in America" (223). Thus, rather than imply an adherence to Japanese customs, the generational ordering implies commitment to life in America, as does the family's adoption of American cuisine and national holidays.

Where the real interruption to Kazuko's childhood comes from is not in the loss, somehow, of Japanese culture (as the loss of Mexican American culture might seem to be the case in *George Washington Gómez*), but rather in the gaining of it. When Kazuko describes her time in Japanese school, it is depicted as an imposition not just on her time, but also on her sense of self. Sone writes:

> Mr. Ohashi and Mrs. Matsui [her teachers] thought they could work on me and gradually mold me into an ideal Japanese *ojoh-san*, a refined young maiden who is quiet, pure in thought, polite, serene, and self-controlled. They made little headway, for I was too much the child of Skidrow […] Therefore promptly at five-thirty every day, I shed Nihon Gakko and returned with relief to an environment which was the only real one to me. (28)

By describing how the Japanese school was imposing a personality type on her that did not fit her, Sone shows how Kazuko was already Americanized – she suggests that Kazuko is more comfortable in an American setting than anywhere else. Being first an

[133] Skidrow, Seattle, where she grows up.

American runs counter to the logic of internment, which suggested that peoples of Japanese descent were indistinguishable from enemies/aliens. In another comparison between the two schools, Sone writes:

> Gradually I yielded to my double dose of schooling. Nihon Gakko was so different from grammar school I found myself switching my personality back and forth daily like a chameleon. At Bailey Gatzert School I was a jumping, screaming, roustabout Yankee, but at the stroke of three when the school bell rang and doors burst open everywhere, spewing out pupils like jelly beans from a broken bag, I suddenly became a modest, faltering, earnest little Japanese girl with a small timid voice. (22)

In this description it is clear that Kazuko favors the "roustabout Yankee" side of herself and "falters" at the imposed gender and social norms of the Japanese school. Unlike the Guálinto/George split in *George Washington Gómez*, Kazuko does not feel a strong allegiance to Japanese history nor does she find it to be in conflict with her American attitudes and beliefs. Thus, while the subject is a "split" one, Sone characterizes this interpellation as a manageable code-switching scenario, where the American half is clearly preferred. Unlike Pinky, it seems, Kazuko can switch identities at will. Sone points out that Japanese schools attempted to make a Japanese out of Kazuko, but by failing to mention how American schools Americanized her, as is highlighted again and again in *George Washington Gómez*, Sone "naturalizes" Kazuko as an American citizen.

Sone also highlights Kazuko's Americanness by picturing Japan and Japanese culture as exotic and different. When she goes to Japan, Kazuko finds that, "People stared at our foreign clothes and I felt self-conscious" (91). Here Sone sets up a distance from Japanese culture in order to distance herself from those who were not "loyal" to America. This distance also continues to point out that the protagonist of her text is more American than Japanese. In terms of gender, her Americanness also sets her apart. She is not shy or demure like the Japanese girls, but demands attention from and participation in the games of the boys who play with her brother (99). Finally, on her arrival home, Kazuko ponders, "We had explored the exotic island of the Japanese. I had felt the charm of its people. I had been impressed by its modern cities as well as by its historic beauty, but I had felt I was an alien among them" (108). By using the word "alien" in this context, Sone attempts to reverse the mainstream American point of view that Asian Americans were not citizens and that, during wartime, Japanese Americans were automatically "alien enemies." Thus, to be "alien" in Japan meant she was at "home" in America. The exoticization of Japan further distances her from its culture and aligns her with American sentiments. She is just a tourist there, and, she explains, "This America, where I was born, surrounded by people of different racial extractions, was still my home" (108).

As the above quote suggests, Kazuko finds a home in a multiethnic America where she feels comfortable. After finding out that they could not find a summer rental because they were of Japanese descent, Mrs. Itoi tells Kazuko "I want you, Henry, and

Sumi-chan [her brother and sister] to learn to respect yourselves. Not because you are white, black or yellow, but because you're a human being. Never forget that. No matter what anyone may call you, to God you are still his child" (114). Mrs. Itoi's comment is reminiscent of the ideal of all races and ethnicities coming together to make America that is propagated in Frank Capra's *War Comes to America*.[134] Here Sone places this highly American statement of tolerance (mingled with Christian ideology)[135] in the mouth of her mother, who in unable to become a citizen. Sone connects this incident directly to the citizenship status of her parents. Confused about why "being Japanese" would matter, Kazuko thinks, "I knew that Father and Mother were not Americans, as we were, because they could not become naturalized American citizens because they were Orientals. But being Oriental had never been an urgent problem to us, living in Skidrow" (113). Here, Sone shows how the refusal of landlords to rent to Japanese stems directly from racist laws that prevent their naturalization as citizens and prevent them from acquiring their own property. Despite their inability to become citizens, her father tells her, "After the young ones were born, our roots sank deeper here. This is our

[134] Kazuko's understanding of a multiethnic, tolerant America neatly matches Lowe's definition of multiculturalism:
"Multiculturalism levels the important differences and contradictions within and among racial and ethnic minority groups according to the discourse of pluralism, which asserts that American culture is democratic terrain to which every variety of constituency has equal access and in which all are represented, while simultaneously masking the existence of exclusions by recuperating dissent, conflict, and otherness through the promise of inclusion" (86).

[135] Mrs. Itoi comes from a Congregationalist/Christian family from Japan, she is not a convert (Sumida 224). This contrasts with Shirley Geok-lin Lim's argument that "Mrs. Itoi is the absolute pole of Japanese identity. She instructs her daughter on Japanese foods (pp. 72-73), customs (p. 80), and literature (pp.117-18)" and that the Christian theology taught at the camps further did violence to Kazuko's Japanese identity ("Japanese" 295).

children's home, and it has become ours" (121). Again, Sone emphasizes the very Americanness of the ethnic subjects who are both legally and socially excluded.

Characterized perhaps as naïve given the later internment of her, her family, and her community, Sone paints Kazuko as one who views the world from the stand point of this multicultural ideal. She anticipates and expects equality in America and each time her "Japanese blood" "intrudes" on her multicultural peace, she further recognizes that the American mainstream requires a washing white of cultural ties in order to be assimilated. Another moment when she questions this is when Kazuko and some of her Japanese friends are not allowed to swim at Antler's Lodge; they quietly protest, "'We're not Japs. We're American citizens.' But we piled into the car and sped away trying to ignore the bruise on our pride" (119). It is Pearl Harbor, the Internment and their attendant racist attitudes that bring Kazuko to the understanding that the promise of American inclusion is based on the understanding that the racial subject must be washed white in order to assimilate. Thus, Sone interprets the promise of education and American pluralism as the idealism of her youthful self. Kazuko is a model patriot, but she is deemed alien by the mainstream. Internment officials must "re-educate" its Japanese and Japanese American captives, Sone suggests, because the violence and racism of the Internment necessarily calls into crisis any belief in American ideals that they may have had. In Kazuko's case, Sone argues, her Americanism was full and complete.

Caroline Chung Simpson suggests of the Internment that "The unprecedented modern American trauma of massive Japanese American relocation and Internment so clearly threatened the ideal of the American nation that it created an undeniable uncanny effect by seeming to dissolve the difference between America as a symbol of democratic freedom and the tyranny of a police state represented by the Axis powers" (21). For Kazuko, so thoroughly "American" as Sone reiterates again and again, the interment was a wake-up call that American inclusion was something that could be upheld or revoked based on racism intensified by wartime hysteria. The Internment, therefore, shifts the focus from a multiethnic, tolerant America to one where subjects considered "unassimilable" are labeled as such despite citizenship status or any other criteria besides race. As Lim puts it, "The declaration of war brings to a head the tensions between Japanese racial origin and American identity" ("Japanese" 295). Indeed, as Sone writes of the moments after Pearl Harbor, "I felt as if a fist had smashed my pleasant little existence, breaking it into jigsaw puzzle pieces. An old wound opened up again, and I found myself shrinking inwardly from my Japanese blood, the blood of an enemy (145-6). Here, for the first time, if only briefly, Kazuko alienates her Japanese self as enemy, instead of understanding her dual heritage as simply part of American diversity.

The racist hysteria after Pearl Harbor and the Internment environment put into question the status of Kazuko's Americanism. It also brings into question the ideals of American tolerance and acceptance, something she has accepted so naturally up to this

point that she never even mentions learning about it in school. By interpreting Kazuko's Americanness as natural, it denatures the logic of the internment. Of the injustices after Pearl Harbor she writes, "It made me positively hivey the way the FBI agents continued their raids into Japanese homes and business places and marched the Issei men away into the old red brick immigration building, systematically and efficiently" (151). Reminiscent of the police raid on Mr. Itoi, where police officers employed threats in order to glean a bribe from Mr. Itoi, the FBI agents fail to uphold the basic rights of Issei on the West Coast.[136] Sone also quotes what she calls the "Superpatriots," who, wanting to trample the rights of Nisei the same as Issei, lump both citizens and non-citizens alike into an unassimilable, un-American group, saying: "You can't make an American out of little Jap Junior just by handing him an American birth certificate" (158). Whereas Kazuko reads herself into the multicultural ideal she learned about in school, white citizens trample that ideal by using race as a category for exclusion from American wartime unity. In camp, Sone sees that "Of one thing I was sure. The wire fence was real. I no longer had the right to walk out of it. It was because I had Japanese ancestors. It was also because some people had little faith in the ideas and ideals of democracy.

[136] Some of the first incidents that Sone depicts of her childhood have to do with corrupt police in the Skidrow, Seattle neighborhood where she grew up. She writes, "During those impressionable years, the police became our sworn enemies, especially after two of them shoved their way into our household one night and arrested Father as a bootlegger" (34). This incident works to show that the Internment is not the first example of abuse and mistreatment by authorities that the Itoi family experienced. The incident also corresponds to the charge that the Internment was a way for whites to usurp the properties and businesses of the Japanese. As many critics have argued and as Sone herself writes in her preface to the 1979 edition of *Nisei Daughter*, the Internment "happened because the President and Congress yielded to the pressures of agricultural and other economic interest groups on the West Coast" (xvi).

They said that after all these were but words and could not possibly insure loyalty. New laws and camps were surer devices" (177-8). Here, the questioning of Japanese American loyalty makes Kazuko question her own loyalty to an ideal of American acceptance. Sone interprets education in the American system, therefore, as a fraud easily uncovered by the racism that both individuals and now the national government exhibit at will. Like Paredes's depiction of discrimination toward Mexicans in a Mexican restaurant, Sone highlights the shifting nature of racial inclusion and exclusion in America and ties it to national and foreign policy.

The citizenship status of her parents comes up again during the Internment. When Sone describes her character questioning the legality of Internment, she immediately reminds readers of the citizenship status of her parents. She writes:

> What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn't I been given a fair trial? Maybe I wasn't considered an American anymore. My citizenship wasn't real, after all. Then what was I? I was certainly not a citizen of Japan as my parents were. On second thought, even Father and Mother were more alien residents of the United States than Japanese nationals for they had little tie with their mother country. In their twenty-five years in America, they had worked and paid their taxes to their adopted government as any other citizen. (177)

Here, Sone justifiably questions the nature of the laws that allow citizens to be detained without charges and without a trial. She understands that citizenship should protect her

from this, but then, simultaneously understands that the U.S. government could feasibly deny her *her* citizenship. This feasibility is expressed by the fact that her parents, 25-year residents in the U.S., could not obtain citizenship rights at all.[137] The laws that prohibit Issei naturalization and ownership of property make Sone question the laws that protect any citizen, and therefore she is also questioning the worth and idealism of American citizenship. Coupled with the earlier statement: "We were quite sure that our rights as American citizens would not be violated, and we would not be marched out of our homes on the same basis as enemy aliens" (158), Sone's text highlights the contradictions between the learned and assumed guarantees of citizenship and the hard results of racist practice and government "imperative."[138]

The Internment is pictured, not as an Americanizing moment as hoped by the WRA, but as an event that shakes the faith of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the possibility of mainstream acceptance or in a tolerant and inclusive U.S. The forced destruction of Japanese language books mirrors the falsified and white supremacist history that Guálinto learned in school. In both instances, the silencing of cultural and racial differences is meant to aid the racial subject in whiting out their differences and speeding them toward assimilation. By only supplying white American history, it is

[137] Valerie Solar similarly suggests that the marginality of Japanese Americans before the war reflects the denial of citizenship rights during the war. She writes, "Legally barred from owning property through a series of laws called the Alien Land Laws and oftentimes segregated into Little Tokyos or otherwise prevented from living in certain neighborhoods, the provisional status of U.S. citizenship for those of Asian ethnicity made itself known in the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor" (115-16).

[138] Earlier in the text, right after hearing about Pearl Harbor, the narrator recalls, "I knew instinctively that the fact that I was an American by birthright was not going t help me escape the consequences of this unhappy war" (146).

easier to convince youth of the tolerance and moral rightness of whiteness while they are in school. Life experience, on the other hand, forces them to understand race as an organizing principle in society. Sone shows the Internment as diminishing Kazuko's belief in American values. She writes, "In the meantime we had drifted farther and farther away from the American scene. We had been set aside, and we had become adjusted to our peripheral existence. The great struggle in which the world was engaged seemed far away, remote from our insulated way of life" (198).[139] At the same time, like the Issei who were permanent aliens in the U.S., the Nisei lose what is supposed to be their birthright.[140] Sone writes, "Once more I felt like a despised, pathetic two-headed freak, a Japanese and an American, neither of which seemed to be doing me any good" (158-9). Like Pinky, Kazuko feels aligned with the American mainstream up until the point when she is segregated into camps based on her racial make-up. The questioning of American values and the shaking of the foundation of citizenship, however, is renegotiated and reformulated during the Internment period.

Sone interprets the Internment as a time of renegotiation, a time when Kazuko recognizes that she must becomes Monica in order to attempt to avoid a repeat of the internment and in order to be able to continue to align herself with the now apparently hypocritical practice of Americanism. While the Internment made her aware of

[139] Simpson writes, "If they could not share space and time with modern Americans, then they could not share in the cultural memories and nationalist sentiments to critical to assimilation" (65).
[140] See also Sumida, pg. 230, for a similar discussion.

prejudice on a national and institutional scale, the protagonist negotiates a place for herself in the U.S. wartime landscape. Showing resignation, the character thinks:

> In the privacy of our hearts, we had raged, we had cried against the injustices, but in the end, we had swallowed our pride and learned to endure. Even with all the mental anguish and struggle, an elemental instinct bound us to this soil. Here we were born; here we wanted to live. We had tasted of its freedom and learned of its brave hopes for a democracy. It was too late, much too late for us to turn back. (124)

In other words, the protagonist makes the decision to continue to have faith in American values, despite them being shaken by the Internment itself. That the protagonist can believe in the ideal when she is aware that it is not a reality, speaks both to the power of those ideals and to the promises she encountered in the American school system.

In several passages, Sone relates how this resignation to continue to have faith in American values arises. After hearing the Psalms read by a minister in camp, Sone writes, "I was convinced that this was not the end of our lives here in camp, but just the beginning; and gradually it dawned on me that we had not been physically mistreated nor would we be harmed in the future. I knew the greatest trial ahead of us would be of a spiritual nature" (186). Here, the protagonist decides that the fight is internal, and therefore she makes it more manageable and winnable. Like Moss in *Home of the Brave*, she suggests that a change of attitude and a loss of resentment is what are needed. She

continues, “I had been tense and angry all my life about prejudice, real and imaginary. The evacuation had been the biggest blow, but there was little to be gained in bitterness and cynicism because we felt that people had failed us. The time had come when it was more important to examine our own souls, to keep our faith in God and help to build that way of life which we so desired” (186). Here, Sone suggests not only an Americanized and Christian solution to the failure of a multiethnic pluralism, but also suggests an individual solution rather than a group one. As we will see, the negotiation of the protagonist with a racist system becomes more and more about the individual overcoming limitations than about the mainstream changing to be more tolerant. In what is perhaps ironic symbolism, when the narrator describes snow at the camps she writes “we moved as if in a dream through a muffled white world. There was nothing but whiteness all around us, the white-mantled barracks, the white dunes and the blank white sky” (197).[141]

An important negotiation that takes place during Internment has to do with the creation of the Nisei Combat Team. Simpson reminds us that “In an effort to make way for a new generation of Americanized Japanese, the community analysts would designate the Nisei as the future of Japanese America, with the Issei doomed to symbolize the archaic reservoir of Japanese memories and experiences that must be amended” (65). Thus, what the Nisei decide about their loyalty to America and

[141] This passage is reminiscent of one of the final scenes in *Pinky*, where a nursing student tells Pinky that “Every time I sterilize the sheets she [Aunt Dicey] puts them back again. Says they ain’t white enough.”

American values symbolizes, for the mainstream, the future place of Japanese Americans. By signing loyalty oaths and joining the military in wartime, the Nisei take on a particularly reconciliatory role. Howard would characterize this as "Second-generation, mostly English-speaking Nisei patriots […] are depicted as more American than thou—admirably, tenaciously holding to 'American' principles of equality and freedom even as their government betrayed those Americans and betrayed those principles" (218-19). Sone characterizes this as a moment of patriotic commitment. Like Pinky accepting segregation instead of mounting a radical critique or instead of leaving the south for good, Sone characterize the Nisei as accepting the terms offered by the American mainstream, even as she cannot help but highlight the unfairness of the new terms. This (re)education of the Nisei promises that if they fight and if they declare loyalty, that *then* they will be accepted into the mainstream.

In a passage that mirrors Kazuko finding out she was Japanese, Sone tells us, "Then one day a group of army personnel marched into our dreaming camp on a special mission and our idyllic life of nothingness came to a violent end. They made a shocking announcement. 'The United States War Department has decided to form a special combat unit for the Nisei. We have come to recruit volunteers'" (198). Thus, where as her mother interrupts her childhood idealism to inform her that she is Japanese, the War Department interrupts the camp's idyllic state of limbo by declaring that the Nisei *might be* American. Instead of living in limbo or being excluded from the war, the Nisei are suddenly asked to make a big decision. Even though Sone seems to be pro-loyalty in

this instance, she still depicts her characters as having to negotiate a response to this new demand by the U.S. government. After hearing Roosevelt's words about how Americanism is not about race or ancestry but about the responsibilities of citizenship, Sone writes, "It was the sort of declaration which rang true and clear in our hearts, but there were questions in our minds which needed answering" (199). Sone outlines the discomfort that Nisei felt about being in a segregated unit, to which the War Department responds, "The War Department is offering you a chance to volunteer and to distinguish yourselves as Japanese-American citizens in the service of your country. Believe me, this combat unit is not segregation in the sense you think it is" (200). Again, as in Pinky, the authorities bargain with the minority subjects – accept segregation and we will continue to promise that you will become fully American.

In this negotiation, the Nisei present decide it would be the best thing to fight: "Dunks [a fellow Nisei] said, 'It's the general public I'm thinking about. They're the ones who count. They want proof of our loyalty. Okay, I'm giving it to them, and maybe I'll die for it if I'm unlucky. But if after the war's over and our two cents don't cut any ice with the American public, well, to blazes with them!'" (200). Here we see a willingness to prove loyalty by fighting in the U.S. army. At the same time, we also see an understanding that this is the limit of their willingness to comply with the expectations of the mainstream. In other words, Sone interprets this moment of (re)education through a new promise as not all all-out loyalty, but a loyalty with conditions. Despite the negotiation, however, the protagonist believes, "The birth of the Nisei combat team

was the climax to our evacuee life, and the turning point. It was the road back to our rightful places" (201). At this point we see a final resignation that America was still the desired home of the protagonist. She now believes that individual achievements and sacrifices will prove to the mainstream that the Nisei belong in America. Her next step, predictably, is to re-enter America's education system. Monica leaves the camp and immerses herself in the white world of the Midwest and East.[142]

Given the suggestion that the Internment ripped apart the idyllic notion that the protagonist had of American pluralism, it would be a stretch to suggest that she fully endorses assimilation. At the same time, given her willingness to negotiate on white terms, it is hard to read these final chapters as protest and dissent on the part of the protagonist. Yet the author, interpreting the process of education and reeducation in America creates, like *Pinky* (whose message was supposed to be inclusive) and *George Washington Gómez* (whose message can be read as highlighting the failures of assimilation), a condition of double segregation for her protagonist. I read these final chapters as revealing the strange bargain that Japanese American Nisei were offered in return for their loyalty and reemergence into American society. Simpson writes, "The popular media, far from simply burying the news of Japanese American Internment as the war ended, sometimes actively engaged the concept of Japanese Americanness both

[142] An alternative to this conditional loyalty are the actions of Mr. Itoi. At first he sees the Interment as a vacation (184). When he finally has to find a job, he surprisingly becomes a police officer (195)—this despite the family's hatred of them in Seattle and the suspicions that would go along with becoming part of the security force of the oppressors. Yet, as we soon learn, being a member of the security force was a way to show double loyalty – ostensibly loyal to the WRA, Mr. Itoi aids the evacuees in pilfering extra lumber and presumably takes part in other minor infractions.

as a discomfiting challenge to national ideologies and histories and as a means of recasting national boundaries" (21). Here we see how the U.S. cast the story of Japanese Interment both as a challenge and as a promise. Based on the ending of her narrative, I argue that Sone interprets this as the idea that American democracy could include the recently rejected citizens, but only in small numbers or as individuals.

In leaving camp for the first time, Monica and her family understand that "Somehow we felt we ought not to travel in droves or congregate in public in large groups. One Japanese face was conspicuous enough, and a party of them might be downright obnoxious" (204). Here, though seemingly acquiescing to mainstream attitudes and expectations, Sone points to the racism that is inherent in the individualist answer to racial tolerance – the characters must not only be segregated from white society, but also segregated from each other. Sone interprets this dual segregation as necessitating a shedding of the past. Of moving east she writes, "Now that I had shed my past, I hoped that I might come to know another aspect of America which would inject strength into my hyphenated Americanism instead of pulling it apart" (216). Monica, by moving east and trying to blend in, here decides to shed her past in an effort to know America better. This can be read as an attempt to whitewash herself in order to blend into the mainstream. She points to this again in discussing leaving the camp permanently:

> Before I had left Camp Minidoka, I had been warned over and over again that once I was outside, I must behave as inconspicuously as possible so as not to

> offend the sensitive public eye. I made up my mind to make myself scarce and invisible, but I discovered that an Oriental face, being somewhat of a rarity in the Midwest, made people stop in their tracks, stare, follow and question me. (219-20)[143]

Again, while this shows a willingness to try to attempt to white oneself out, or at least disappear, it points to the inability for the racial subject to do so.[144] Despite clearing herself of her racial or ethnic past, Monica finds that she is just as conspicuous as before.

Sone's focus on the shedding of the past and the blending in of Nisei is supported by historians of the Internment. Sumida argues that "The 'Relocation' was a diaspora: once evacuated from the West Coast and interned, nisei [sic] judged qualified were sent to work or to school in scattered places around the country where, on their own and alone, they were to become assimilated—in a sense, as invisible—as possible" (234). In *Nisei Daughter* this understanding, this push toward the whiting out of her racial past, comes about not from the interpellation in the American school system, but rather from the forced and violent imprisonment by the U.S. government, which splits her identification with American values from her sense of self as a Japanese American

[143] Part of this conspicuousness can certainly be attributed to the national press. Sone writes, "The editorial sections of the newspapers and magazines were plastered with cartoons of hideous-looking Japanese. The Japanese were always caricatured with enormous, moon-shaped spectacles and beady, myopic eyes. A small mustache was perched arrogantly over massive, square buck teeth, and his bow-legged posture suggested a simian character" (119).

[144] Another injunction on her behavior comes from a Mr. Beck of the WRA Employment Office. He says, "'Whatever you do, don't quit at the drop of a hat. If you switch jobs too often, the Nisei are going to get a reputation as poor risks'" (223). Monica is encouraged, in other words, to view her white employers as authorities and to resist questioning their practices.

deserving of the manifestations of those values. Sone, after showing her protagonist's pride in her dual heritage in her youth, does not fully endorse this whiting out of racial community, but instead sees it as a negotiation with an America that would imprison its own citizens and then release them on the condition that they blend in rather than stand out. At the same time, as Simpson argues, "Most Nisei left the camps filled with the sense that the future of Japanese American community's success depended on them, on their acceptance by mainstream white institutions and communities" (137). Simpson also suggests that "The resettlement as an early experiment in racial integration, was a concerted attempt to reconstitute rather than to include Japanese Americans" (164). This reconstitution, or whiting out, seems to be the case, as Monica states that she "embarked on a life more normal and happier than I had dared hope for" when she moves to the Midwest (229).

Yet, in her retelling of her normal and happy life, Monica offers a sense of regret about the conditions of assimilation and finds herself dually segregated. In discussing the sororities at Wendell college, where she is enrolled, she says, "The sororities included us [she and few other Nisei women] in their rush parties, too, although because of a national ruling we could not be asked to join. I knew about this policy, although I had ceased to feel personally hurt about it" (227). Again, Sone points to the racism that is inherent in the larger structures of American life and then shows how her protagonist must find the individual strength to get over it. Individually, Pinky can hold herself above the insults she receives; collectively, minorities were subjected to

widespread institutional racism. Additionally, like Moss in *Home of the Brave*, Monica must get over her personal resentment in order to survive. And yet, when she returns to camp to see her parents, which is the final narrative event of the book, so too returns the resentment she feels toward the Interment and the regret at the conditions of assimilation imposed on her through the Interment experience. She recalls that "At Camp Minidoka, I was startled to see an MP again, standing at the gate. I had forgotten about such things a MP's and barbed-wire fences" (230). She also adds that "When I stepped into our old barracks room, I felt as if I had returned to a shell of a prison" (231). By showing the return of the repressed – the barbed-wire, the MPs, and the prison environment of the camps – Sone points to the inability to shed the past, to fully rid oneself of resentment, to reject the racial community, or to silence the injustices of her experience.

Indeed, instead of a full forgetting, in a climactic moment, Monica declares her dedication to her Japanese heritage: "I don't resent my Japanese blood anymore. I'm proud of it, in fact, because of you and the Issei who've struggled so much for us. It's really nice to be born into two cultures, like getting a real bargain in life, two for the price of one" (236). Thus, despite the bargain offered by mainstream America, which results in separation from both whites and Japanese in America, Monica is determined to embrace her Japanese self and not whiteout her past. At the same time, Monica accepts the condition offered by the mainstream that advancement by racial minorities in American society is individual, not collective. She writes, "In spite of the war and the

mental tortures we went through, I think the Nisei have attained a clearer understanding of America and its way of life, and we have learned to value her more. Her ideas and ideals of democracy are based essentially on religious principles and her very existence depends on the faith and moral responsibilities of each individual" (236-7). This focus on individual advancement mirrors the gradualist approach of the era and functions to displace blame from the American system of racist oppression onto the individual racists in America. At the same time, it suggests that tolerance will be doled on an individual basis, and not collectively. Thus, Sone points out that Monica's parents are still "immigrants" even after the Internment (237), and the Japanese are thus not accepted as a group. Yet, Monica can see herself as Japanese and mainstream at the same time when she returns to Wendell College and sees her two selves as "blended" (238).

The protagonist, by continuing to believe in the American promise of education, allows herself to continue to feel accepted and to continue to feel like she accepts her parents and her past. While Monica seems to accept that racial inclusion and tolerance in America will be granted to individuals and not communities, she refuses to whiteout her Japanese heritage despite both the forced and suggested imperative that she do so. Yet, Sone casts Monica as isolated in the Midwest and reliant upon the largess of white benefactors who provide for her education and accommodations. At the same time, while Monica's assertion that "Now I know I'm just as responsible as the men in Washington for its actions. Somehow it all makes me feel much more at home in

America," suggests that Monica will continue to align herself with American values and fulfill her patriotic duty of voting and participating in democracy, Sone has proved this statement wrong through her text. Kazuko was a model child and patriot and was shown in no way to be responsible for the racism she received from national, state, and local institutions. Instead, Sone casts the feeling of home, stripped so violently away by the internment – where she was literally disposed of her home – as deferred as well as reserved for whites. Because in the final moments of the text Monica goes "home" to visit her parents in the camp and then returns to the segregated Wendell college, Sone sabotages the sentiments of her protagonist and highlights instead the dual nature of her protagonist's segregation in America.

Yet, the retention of herself as a split subject, instead of the cutting away of her racial background, shows that Monica overcomes some of the restrictions placed on her as a Japanese American. Thus, as a negotiation, Sone shows how Monica both succumbs to some aspects of assimilation (like the advancement of individuals over groups), but does not fully accept the conditions of forgetting and whiting out that are demanded of the racial subject. Instead, the blending of Japanese and American selves defiantly retains the Japanese background, history, family and community from which she comes. By holding on to the American self, at the same time, she refuses to acquiesce to the defilement of the founding principles she so values.

Individualized and Isolated: Conclusions

Like George in *George Washington Gómez*, Pinky has experienced the life of a "white" person while removed from the racial community. When she comes back, however, she is encouraged by Aunt Dicey to not be something that "she ain't" and is reminded by Miss Em, the white matriarch that she nurses, that "Nobody deserves respect as long as she pretends to be something she isn't." Thus, in a much more literal sense than in *George Washington Gómez* or *Nisei Daughter*, the racial subject is reminded of the fact that they cannot whitewash their racial past – Pinky is reminded of this in a violent fashion as well: in one scene she is harassed by police and in another by two drunken men and in both instances we see that she was granted respect when they thought she was white and denied it when they found out she was "black." More than any other film of this era, *Pinky* demonstrates that as a racial subject in America, you cannot white out your past.

Pinky also enlists the power of naming to recode herself when she goes north. Calling herself "Patricia Johnson," when Pinky is up north she takes on a name that does not have ties to her racial past or to passing. Unlike George and Monica, however, Pinky is chastised for using the foreign-sounding name. "Pinky is better," Miss Em tells her. At the same time, when Tom calls Pinky, "Pat" and when he tells her "There'll be no Pinky Johnson after we're married. You'll be Mrs. Thomas Adams for the rest of your life," the audience is meant to see this as a lie, as a dishonesty, and as a negative rejection of self. The third term, then, is untenable and alien. Pinky, therefore, embraces her racially

signifying name just as she decides to remain within the racial community.[145] In the case of Pinky, she is not visibly marked as black and therefore has a more permeable social position than Sone and Paredes's protagonists. The decision to remain black, the movie indicates, is in the end her choice.

Pinky, *George Washington Gómez*, and *Nisei Daughter* all work to interpret the promise of education in American as applied to racial subjects. All three, to varying degrees, come to the same conclusion: their protagonists are doubly segregated. They can neither reenter the communities from which they come nor successfully enter the mainstream world as they have been promised. All of these solutions correspond to the idea that racial inclusion in American could be based on individual merit and ambition. Yet, as all of the protagonists learn, one must remain in their place and not give up on the system. This untenable position is expressed across races and in both the mainstream and less well-known mediums that they works represent. Additionally, while all of these texts have protagonists that could be called accommodationists or assimilationists, all of the works condemn racism. However, it is how this racism is condemned and on what terms the racial subject is offered entry into the American mainstream, that so aligns these seemingly dispirit texts.

Are these works ultimately a critique of the laws and practices that prevent full citizenship or of the society that upholds racist standards and practices? In *Pinky*, the law can be changed and an individual can succeed. In *Nisei Daughter*, Sone looks

[145] Kydd argues that "Each choice [going back north or staying down south] is accompanied by a different name and a different form of oppression" (116).

hopefully to laws that will allow her parents to become full citizens. In *George Washington Gómez*, Elodia and Leytón represent a democratic challenge to the racist political system. Yet, all of these characters are still compelled to adopt and adapt to the social norms that suggest that full inclusion and equality is based on the condition of whiteness. The characters' experiences with these provisions suggest a give and take and a negotiation with the expectations and demands of a racist social system that promises equality and tolerance.

Chapter 3: Earning and Cultural Capital:

The Work that Determines Place

Go for Broke!: Working in the Trenches for Civilian Ends

In 1951, one year into the Korean war and the year that the U.S. signed a treaty to end the occupation of Japan, MGM released the film *Go For Broke!*, starring Van Johnson and written and directed by Robert Pirosh.[146] The film also stars "the heroes of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team" and uses Japanese Americans to play Japanese Americans.[147] The film is about the exploits of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Division, World War Two units made up of Nisei[148] soldiers, and it aims to create a positive image of Japanese American patriotism and valor. One critic suggests that this trend was widespread in the postwar moment. The critic writes:

> The Japanese, who during the war had been demonized, were permitted back into the human race and depicted sympathetically by means of social problem films: King Vidor's *Japanese War Bride* (1952, Fox), *Go for Broke* (1951, MGM), most importantly *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1954, MGM, direct John Sturges, starring Spencer Tracy, Robert Ryan, Ernest Borgnine, Lee Marvin, and Ann

---

[146] Pirosh directed a total of 5 films and wrote for television into the 1980s. *Washington Story* (1952) also stars Van Johnson.

[147] All quotations from the film are from my own transcription. Joy Nishie tells us that the producers felt that "The success of the film hinged on the use of Japanese American actors," of which none could be found, so they settled with people of other occupations (26). It is unclear to me how many of the men in these roles were veterans.

[148] Nisei refers to second-generation Japanese Americas. Issei refers to first-generation, Sansei to third-generation, and Kibei to second-generation individuals (usually men) who were born in America but were educated in Japan. Until the McCarren-Warren act of 1952 allowed for the naturalization of Issei, only the Nisei, Kibei and Sansei were American citizens.

> Francis),[149] which has survived as a canonical example of a suspense thriller, and *Three Stripes in the Sun* (1955, Columbia) all dramatized the Japanese as victims of American bigotry. ("Socially Conscious" 128)

The race problem film was a major trend in the postwar era. The narratives of these films effectively "solved" race problems, usually by asking that the racial individual conform to white social standards and believe that race relations in America would inevitably improve, if only very gradually.

Go for Broke! opens with the image of marching Japanese American soldiers who look war-worn and heroic. Franklin Roosevelt's words, issued with the announcement of the creation of the Nisei combat units in 1943, are superimposed over the marching soldiers. His speech reads: "The proposal of the War Department to organize a combat team consisting of loyal American citizens of Japanese descent has my full approval. The principal on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."[150] Next, the "Battle Record" of the 442nd and the 100th is superimposed: "7 Major Campaigns in Europe, 9,486 Casualties, 18,143 Individual Decorations, 7 Presidential Unit Citations." Patriotic music and flags in the wind, in addition to the text on the screen, indicates to the audience of the film that

---

[149] It is interesting that this critic should name *Bad Day at Blackrock* as the most important since there are no Japanese or even Asian Americans in the film (though the story revolves around the murder of a Japanese American veteran).

[150] This is also quoted in full in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*, and is slightly abridged here. See *Nisei Daughter* 198-99.

these men are heroes, patriotic, and American. Greg Garrett writes, "American wartime propaganda of all kinds tried to redefine the democratic principles we fought for and to emphasize that it was a battle every American had to support, regardless of race or color." Indeed, Franklin Roosevelt announced to the American people that "We cannot stand before the world as a champion of oppressed peoples unless we practice as well as preach the principles of democracy for all men. Racial strife destroys national unity at home and renders us suspect abroad" (qtd. in Wilkerson 2). Beginning with Roosevelt's speech and valorizing a non-white unit, marks the tone for the entire film: the film's sole purpose appears to be to honor Japanese American soldiers and to naturalize their participation in the war.[151] By naturalizing their presence in the fighting forces, the film attempts to forefront their military record in the popular imagination, which might serve to override the predominance of the memory of Pearl Harbor and the Internment.

The story begins at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where the white Lieutenant Grayson (Van Johnson) arrives to take command of a Nisei unit. He finds a rag-tag group of soldiers who lack discipline and are comically indisposed to military conduct. Grayson is for most of the film unhappy that he has been assigned to a Japanese American unit and expresses doubt about their ability to fight and their loyalty to the U.S. With

[151] African Americans, on the other hand, were characterized as poor soldiers in the press. *The New York Times* reports that "the generalization that 'Negro troops can't fight' has been depressingly prevalent on and behind the Italian front virtually since the Ninety-second Division arrived" (Braker 12). To my knowledge, no Hollywood movie was made at this time that reconstructed the image of black soldiers into a positive one. The United States War Department did, however, make a film called *The Negro Soldier*, directed by Frank Capra in 1943. This film was mainly intended to recruit African American soldiers, but later found a niche as a film shown to school children. Carlton Moss played a large role in putting together this film. See my first chapter in this project. For more on *The Negro Soldier* and on Carlton Moss, see also Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black*.

Grayson's influence, however, the unit is whipped into shape and is soon shipped off to the European theater. Joy Nishie writes that "The movie characterizes the Japanese Americans as 'misfits' who, perhaps, need the guidance of a strong Caucasian figure. They are disheveled and shown gambling, playing the ukulele, or complaining bitterly about their situation" (21). The film follows the lives of five or six of the Japanese American soldiers, who come from Hawaii, the West Coast, and the U.S. interior (offering three different takes on the internment).[152] There is Sam (Lane Nakano), the good-looking, hard-working West Coaster whose family and fiancé are interned. There is Tommy (Henry Nakamura), a comically short man who wants to fight in the Pacific because his parents died in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Chick (George Miki) comes from the interior, is resentful toward the army from the start, but has not experienced the internment. Frank (Akira Fukunaga) studied to be an architect at University of Southern California, but he blames his poor eyesight for his failure to get a job other than fruit peddler (Chick blames not his eye sight, but the slant of his eyes). And there is Kaz (Ken K. Okamoto), who plays the ukulele and represents the carefree nature of the Hawaiian native.[153]

---

[152] Nishie writes, in the film, "the mainland Japanese Americans express bitterness about their families being interned in concentration camps while the Hawaiian Japanese Americans contend with Pearl Harbor. However, both groups want to prove their loyalty to the United States" (21).

[153] This portrayal, in many ways, results from the confusion of Japanese "native" customs with those of Polynesians. Nishie argues, however, that "After the numerous movies before and during that war that depicted cartoon-like stereotypical Japanese, *Go for Broke!*, in its portrayal of the Nisei soldier, in a sense 'broke' the image of the Japanese—and certainly the Japanese American. As portrayed in the film, these soldiers embodied a wide range of personalities. These portrayals only reinforced the idea that Japanese Americans were 'real' people, no different than other U.S. citizens" (26).

The film's intention, as stated through character dialogue, is to show the American public how courageous and dedicated were the men of the 442nd in order to influence whites to discard their negative attitudes towards Japanese Americas. Early in the film, Sam tells Tommy about the internment experience and why he's sending a package to his family. Tommy says, "Treat you like that. Hard to figure why a guy'd volunteer for the army." Most of the Japanese American characters, though not all, speak with a heavy accent. Their accents mark them as "foreign" as does the film's dialogue, which reveals an attempt to approximate the speech of an ESL Japanese American. The conversation continues:

> SAM. We have to do something, so we never get a deal like that again.
>
> TOMMY. We show em. We show em us Buddhaheads[154] good soldiers. Good Americans.
>
> SAM. That's the idea. I hope it works.
>
> TOMMY. Sure it works, I read a lot of stuff in newspapers about the 442.
>
> SAM. Yeah, all we need now is causalities lists.

Surprisingly, the exchange lacks irony and the men are portrayed as earnestly believing that their military service will prove their loyalty and will change the minds of the

[154] Nishie explains, "In the film, the term 'buddhahead' serves both as an insult and a term of endearment for the Nisei. Crost explains the term: 'Mainlanders called Islanders "buddhaheads," a term of contempt derived from the Japanese word "buta," meaning "pig"' (67)" (22). Yet, in the film, white and Japanese American characters alike refer to all of the Nisei as Buddhaheads.

American people.[155] Not all of the Japanese American soldiers are so inclined, however, and the film allows these characters to voice their dissent as well. Kaz, in an early scene, ponders, "Mix me up. All Nisei outfit, how come haole[156] officers?" Chick tells him that it's another way to make them miserable and calls Camp Shelby "the crummiest camp in the United States."[157] When Frank asks him why he joined the army in the first place, Chick says, "Why, because a wise guy college guy like you snowed me under with a lotta fancy talk. You guys were in relocation centers, you probably got it better here. But me, I was on the outside, Iowa. A free man knocking off 500 bucks a month." Thus, Chick, at least, indicates that he did not fall for the patriotic rhetoric of war, or, more specifically, that he did not fall for the notion that military service would help improve the status of Japanese Americans on the home front. He further illustrates the prejudice against Japanese Americans when he claims that Frank could not get a job as an architect because he is of Japanese descent.

The Japanese American characters also express dissatisfaction with the way that the white lieutenant Grayson does not show enough respect to the Nisei soldiers. Chick and Sam get particularly angry when they see Grayson having a drink with Cully, the

---

[155] Even the insinuation that they need to start dying appears to lack irony. This earnestness, while a bit hard to believe, is countered shortly after when the men complain about the prejudice they have faced in their military and their civilian lives. See below.
[156] Hawaiian slang for whites or foreigners. See below.
[157] Camp Shelby also housed African American recruits and members of the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WACs).

platoon sergeant from the 36th Regiment (from Texas, read: Southern and racist),[158] who has just been spouting off racist stereotypes about the Japanese. Sam further disconnects from the patriotic mission that he explained to Tommy at the beginning of film when he finds out that his brother, who was allowed to leave his internment camp to work the sugar beet fields, has been attacked by white men who threatened to lynch him. When Tommy asks why he was attacked, Sam answers, "Why? Because they've got slant eyes. It's a crime in some places. Dincha know that? How do you like that? We're good enough to carry rifles but we're not good enough to pick sugar beets." This scenario speaks to the realities of racism in the towns surrounding the internment camps. Yet, before the final battle to save the Lost Battalion, Sam comes around again at Tommy's insistence. Tommy says, "We get to the lost battalion and that sergeant [Cully] gonna change his mind about us Buddhaheads. Many people already been changed, huh Sam? … Keeps up like Terry[159] be writing letters … gonna get better … It's rough, it's plenty rough, but we know what it's all about, you bet. More better we go for broke, huh Sam?" Sam smiles at this and states, "Yeah, more better we go for broke." At the end of the film, with their triumphant return to the U.S. through New York Harbor and the footage of Truman awarding the 442nd the Presidential Citation,[160] the movie heralds new opportunities for Japanese Americans in the U.S.

---

[158] In the film, first the 100th gets attached to the 442nd, then the 442nd gets attached to the 36th. Getting "attached" is an action of military expediency where one unit gets subsumed under the command of another.

[159] Sam's fiancé. She has told Sam in letters that news of the 442nd's bravery has made life better at the camps.

[160] The movie uses actual footage from the event, though Truman is not pictured. See Nishie, page 23.

The film aims to convince white American audiences of the merits of Japanese American soldiers and citizens. Beyond celebrating the accomplishments of Japanese American soldiers, the plot follows the conversion of lieutenant Grayson from anti-Japanese to pro-Buddhahead. When Grayson arrives at his post at Camp Shelby, he is clearly dissatisfied. The heroic Japanese American soldiers who are marching with the words of Roosevelt and their awards superimposed over them at the start of the film, transition into a group of soldiers walking right in front of Grayson's jeep. Grayson shows a looks of displeasure, thus highlighting his inability to see the Nisei soldiers as they were just presented to the audience – war-weary, heroic, impassioned, and deserving of the highest military honors. Grayson marches right into the Colonel's office and asks for a transfer, saying he didn't expect to find himself in a "Jap" unit. The Colonel tells him: "They're not Japs, they're Japanese Americans. Nisei. Or, as they call themselves, Buddhaheads," and then adds, "They're all American citizens and they're all volunteers, remember that." After this meeting, Grayson meets with the company commander and asks him: "Tell me, sir, do you use live ammunition on the rifle range?" This sparks another lecture for the new lieutenant:

> CAPT. A Jap's a Jap, aye?
>
> GRAYSON. All I know is they were put under armed guard in relocation centers last year. Maybe the army just had some surplus barbed wire they wanted to use, was that it?

> CAPT. The army was facing an emergency at the start of the war. Possible invasion by Japanese troops. So all Japanese Americans were evacuated from the West Coast. With no loyalty check. No screening. Nothing. If there were any spies among them I can assure you they're not in the 442th. Every man in this outfit has been investigated, re-investigated, and re-re-investigated. I suggest you start getting acquainted.

This scene reinforces the idea that Grayson is close-minded about American-citizen volunteers. At the same time, by stressing how many times the Nisei volunteers were investigated, it reinforces suspicions about Japanese Americans, even as it attempts to dispel them, thus justifying the actions of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and the internment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans on the west coast.[161] At the same time, by arguing that with the initial internment there was no loyalty check, it justifies the later use of loyalty questionnaires.[162] Finally, as in *Home of the Brave*, it is the high brass who are more concerned with military expediency than with prejudice. This suggests that those who occupy the army's highest command are not the ones who replicate stereotypes and racism within the army's structure. In this film, chalking up the Internment to military expediency further works to exonerate the WRA for the

[161] Alison Dundes Renteln reminds us that "The decision to remove the Japanese from the West Coast and to place them in concentration camps was a highly popular one and was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court" (624). The three Supreme Court cases were: *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943), *Yasui v. United States* (1943), and *Korematsu v. United States* (1944).
[162] See my chapter 4.

internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans because it suggests that the WRA was not motivated by racism.

Throughout the course of the film, Grayson slowly recognizes the merits of the men in the 442nd. At first they are shown to lack discipline, to be poor soldiers, and to be at a disadvantage due to their short stature. The film reinforces the stereotype that the Nisei are all short by showing how they cannot keep up with Grayson's long stride and that they have a hard time scaling a wall. Nishie adds, "Though done in a comical way, their size serves as a means to compare their physical characteristics to their taller, Caucasian counterparts" (21). Tommy, whose uniform is grossly oversized and who is dwarfed by Grayson's lanky stature, explicitly fulfills this stereotype.[163] Grayson also does not respect Tommy as a soldier. During a gunfight, Grayson calls forth some men to follow him, as Tommy follows the command, Grayson yells, "Not you!" But Tommy soon proves himself in the same battle to be courageous and bold. He gets shot while collecting mortars, but gets the shells to where the men are firing them anyway. When he gets there, however, he finds not only that the men are dead, but also that he must move the device by hand in order to fire it. He does so with a hurt leg, aims the mortar manually, and kills the German machine-gunner. This is all done without Grayson's knowledge, and while he cannot see it, the audience can. Because Tommy was just insulted and then performed valiantly, the audience anticipates that Grayson will recognize Tommy's courage. When Tommy comes back from the hospital (he actually

[163] Tommy is further diminunized when he develops affection for a piglet which he then keeps as a pet.

goes AWOL because he leaves the hospital before he is released so that he can return to his unit, further proving his mettle), Grayson gives him a knowing glance, a look of appreciation and recognition that signals Grayson is coming around and that the 442nd are proving themselves.

This instance is mirrored by one where Grayson proves himself by standing up for the Nisei soldiers in a moment when none of them are around. As mentioned earlier, the Nisei soldiers see Grayson have a drink with Cully, who was just shown to be highly insensitive toward the Japanese American troops in the bar. When they are having their drink, Cully says, "Japs in a Texas division, man-o-man," to which Grayson replies, "Cully, they're not Japs, they're Japanese Americans. Nisei. Or, if you prefer it, Buddhaheads. But not Japs. They don't like it and neither do I." Grayson gives Cully the same lecture that he got from the Colonel at the beginning of the film, suggesting he has repented from his close-minded ways.[164] Cully then says, "What are you, a Jap lover or something?" and Grayson responds, "I said they're not Japs. I'm warning you, Cully." The two end up fighting over Cully's disrespect of Japanese American soldiers, but nobody is there to witness the fight besides the audience. This, again, creates dramatic

[164] The exchange also suggests that "Jap" is an insult worth avoiding. Given the racist and brutal depictions of the Japanese during World War II, it is no wonder Nisei soldiers would not want to identify with the term. Nishie writes, "As Dick notes: 'Hollywood wasted no time in implementing America's "Slap the Jap" policy. By the spring of 1942, the racial epithets were flying fast; "monkey" was the most common along with its variants, "monkey people" and "ringtails." When "rat" was used, it was prefixed by "yellow" and "slant-eyed"' (230)" (18). "Devil" was also used. Nishie continues, "After Pearl Harbor, Hollywood's portrayal of the Japanese became even worse, and films linked them to the Third Reich, calling the alliance 'Nazi/Nipponese.' […] Coupled with a prejudice already in place in reality, such films furthered anti-Japanese sentiment toward those Japanese of U.S. birth and citizenship" (19).

tension and the anticipation that the Nisei soldiers will recognize Grayson's courage and forgive his racist transgressions. Thus, the story is not only about the acceptance by whites of Japanese Americans, but also about the acceptance by Japanese Americans of whites. Grayson gets his recognition after the 442nd rescues Cully and the 36th; Cully says he's sure glad to see "you Japs," and corrects himself, "Japanese Americans," and further corrects himself, "Buddhaheads." He then says, "He [Grayson] sure is touchy about that. He even slugged me for it." At this, Chick and Sam give each other knowing glances, fulfilling audience expectations for a reconciliation between white Americans and Japanese Americans. This "reconciliation" rejoins American whites with Japanese Americans, as it also points toward the potential softening of American and Japanese relations internationally.

Another way that the film speaks to international relations is in the attempt to dispel Axis wartime and Soviet postwar propaganda that the U.S. was an inherently racist nation. This, again, is directly relevant to the stereotypical image of Japanese during WWII – they were pictured as ape-like, short, and brutal. In the film, the awareness of the connection between domestic racism and foreign relations is played out in a scene involving Grayson. On their way to Italy, he reads a government-issued "Pocket Guide to Italy." It states:

> You and your outfit have been ordered to Italy. Much depends on how you conduct yourself there as a soldier and as a representative of the United States. For 20 years the Italian people have been fed on bunk. Their propagandists

> declared that all of our people look upon Italians with contempt, regarding them as a race of hand-organ men and banana peddlers. We know that such statements are lies. Racial prejudice is abhorrent to our American concept of democracy.[165]

At this point, the lieutenant stops and looks upon the Japanese American soldiers he has been so loath to fight with. He shows recognition that democracy and racial prejudice are not supposed to mix, but he also further validates the patriotism of the Nisei soldiers because they fight despite American prejudice toward them and despite their families being interned. At the same time, when the pamphlet defines racial prejudice in America as a lie, Grayson's own racist attitudes in turn make that statement a lie. The pamphlet and Grayson's reaction to it construct personal racism as a liability to U.S. foreign relations and reveals that domestic attitudes have global ramifications.

Go for Broke! works to dispel the belief in Japanese American treachery during Pearl Harbor and World War II generally by portraying loyal and patriotic Japanese American soldiers. Nishie states that "The film challenged the stereotyped, Hollywood version of the American 'G.I. Joe,' and offered a portrait of U.S. citizen-soldiers who, despite the circumstances of their families and loved ones in their own country, continued to defend American ideals and values" (26). Like Frank Capra's *War Comes to*

[165] The pamphlet continues (after Grayson's over-narration ends): "If you treat the civilian Italians with moderation and tact—and equally with the firmness which your situation demands—you will make your own task easier of accomplishment. Likewise, you may gain the future consideration and support of the Italian people in our effort to restore world order. These are general objectives which your country expects you to bear in mind."

America, *Go for Broke!* attempts to "Americanize" the Japanese American soldiers it represents by including them in the image of the American G.I. and by associating them with American patriotism. The film does this even as it, at times, highlights their "foreignness," especially in regards to their names, their language and accents, and their musical tastes – thus the film suggests that they still have a ways to go in regards to assimilation, but that they are on their way. The film also suggests that the hard work and dedication of Japanese Americans will be rewarded in the same way that European ethnics have been rewarded for their labor and service to the U.S. When Grayson complains to the captain that, "Guy gets in to fight the Japs and end up fighting with 'em. It's a hot one when you come to think of it." The captain tells him, "Oh, I don't know. A lot of us have parents that were born in enemy countries. Italian American, German American." The conversation continues:

> GRAYSON. That's different, sir, and you know it.
>
> CAPT. Why?
>
> GRAYSON. Well, it's just …
>
> CAPT. The shape of their eyes? Or is it the color of their skin?
>
> GRAYSON. Tell the truth, sir, wouldn't you rather be with a different outfit?
>
> CAPT. If I knew a better one, but I don't.

Here, the captain maintains the sameness between ethnic European Americans and Americans of Japanese descent. He also stresses the link between being "American" (i.e. loyal and part of the war effort, in this case) and hard work – he says he does not know

of a better unit and therefore establishes a relationship between labor and acceptance into the mainstream.

Over the course of the film, the Japanese American men who we met at the beginning have developed into strong and willing soldiers. Sam, despite his brother nearly getting lynched and his woman leaving him for another man, puts his all into the final campaign. Tommy proved himself to be a good and loyal soldiers, and he even gives up his piglet pet to help feed a starving Italian family. When Chick learns that Grayson fought Cully in order to stand up for the Nisei, the last of his resentments toward white American and the military are dispelled. Frank quickly gets promoted to squad leader, but dies from sniper fire. Kaz retains his happy demeanor throughout the film and is lauded for his ukulele playing and singing. The men, as Nishi points out (above), are "normalized" in the film narrative. They have sweethearts, heartbreaks, friends in other units, jokes, hardships, and challenges. It is interesting that Frank is the one to die of these five main characters, because the film then need not rectify the fact that he cannot get skilled work on the home front.

Go for Broke! depicts how military service results in Japanese Americans that are assimilable and dedicated. It suggests that labor for one's country, a positive attitude, and a willingness to understand American racism as changeable will carry Japanese Americans into the favor of white America. Nishie argues that the film positively portrays Japanese Americans and is a successful corrective to the negative stereotypes against the Japanese. Additionally, she claims, "The film also broke the stereotype of the

World War II American hero: the Caucasian soldier" (26). The film does, indeed, picture the conversion of whites and Japanese Americans alike in recognizing that racism in America can be challenged by good behavior on the part of racial minorities. It specifically suggests that hard work and service to the country is a means toward assimilation. And, despite the fact that prejudice stripped Japanese Americans of their homes and businesses, the film argues that a stable home life, a secure job, and a gradual end to unfair treatment will be the rewards for hard work and service to the country.[166] Like *War Comes to America*, military service and a wartime footing unite Americans across racial and ethnic lines. At the same time, like *Home of the Brave*, *Go for Broke!* enlists minorities to discard their objections to racism and sacrifice their lives in order to have an opportunity to be accepted in the civilian world.

The American domestic mainstream, at this time, was one characterized by prosperity, conformity, conservatism, and a home-centered lifestyle. Lizabeth Cohen, in *A Consumer's Republic*, argues that "At the center of Americans' vision of postwar prosperity was the private home, fully equipped with consumer durables" (73). Alan Nadel, in *Containment Culture*, adds that "a mythic nuclear family [was seen as] as the universal container of democratic values" in this era (xi). Elaine Tyler May, in *Homeward Bound*, argues that "the 'American way of life' embodied in the suburban nuclear family, as a cultural ideal if not a universal reality, motivated countless postwar Americans to

[166] Because, in the film, the Nisei can convince members of the 36th division, a unit from Texas (and thus the South) that contains at least two (and presumably more) close-minded men, that they are brave and above all loyal, then the film suggests that not only can American attitudes generally be changed, but Southern Americans can become tolerant, too.

strive for it," even if it were unattainable because of one's race or class position (11). May also argues that the values of the middle class home were dominant in American society. She reminds us that "It is all the more important, then, to understand the standards of appropriate behavior established by the white middle class. During the postwar years, there were no groups in the United States for whom these norms were irrelevant" (15). These values set the nuclear home, with attendant male breadwinner and female homemaker gender roles, as the domestic social norm and suggested that "the nuclear family was the foundation of democracy and had to be protected" (74). The suburban home was also the symbol of "democratic abundance" (153) and therefore represented the successful capitalist system: a slice of the pie would be rewarded to all those who worked for it.

In the postwar moment an increase in racial tolerance seemed to be on the horizon. Liberal Democrats were elected to the office of President for five straight terms, and Truman won the 1948 election partly due to his liberal stance on the race problem in America. For the U.S. government, proving that America was a racially tolerant nation was important for both a foreign and a domestic audience. As Tony Shaw puts it in *Hollywood's Cold War*, "U.S. administrations thought that winning the hearts and minds of those at home was every bit as important as those overseas" (3). As Mary Dudziak, in *Cold War Civil Rights*, argues, "If other nations, and particularly nonwhite peoples, were to have faith in democracy, the United States would need to reassure them that American democracy was not synonymous with white supremacy"

(39). At the same time, she writes, "At home, the meaning ascribed to the war would help to shape what would follow. At least on an ideological level, the notion that the nation had a stake in racial equality was widespread" (7). For both audiences, Dudziak tells us, "The U.S. government tried to project a story of progress […] Democracy, it seemed, was the site of an inexorable march toward justice" (250). As domestic and foreign policy objective, the U.S. government and its agents had a stake in (at least the appearance of) improving race relations in America. At the same time, May writes, "Racial and class divisions were concealed beneath an aura of unity in the aftermath of the war. Post-World War II America presented itself as a unified nation, politically harmonious and blessed with widespread affluence" (8). Improved race relations—as belief, stated goal, hope, aspiration, etc.—proved to have staying power and currency well beyond the immediate war years.

The race problem films of the era mirrored the belief that an underlying element of democracy was racial equality at the same time that they promoted the belief that, in a democracy, labor and service to country would be rewarded with prosperity and participation in mainstream consumer culture. Tony Shaw, in *Hollywood's Cold War*, argues that "most social problem films of this era also provided viewers with 'happy endings' that preached faith and community in the liberal capitalist system. In this way, these formative years of cinema established a trend for the future, with American films raising social issues yet containing them in satisfactory bourgeois resolutions" (12), which he sees in the films' "inherent endorsement of individualism, consumerism, and

patriotism" (158). May argues, "In the propaganda battles that permeated the Cold War era, American leaders promoted the American way of life as the triumph of capitalism, allegedly available to all who believed in its values" (8). These problem films, and films generally, that presented an ideal of American domestic life rejected models of social advancement for minorities that required them to demand global rights. Instead, the focus was on how individuals could change their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to more readily be accepted by mainstream society – represented by the reaping of capitalism's rewards: home ownership, a stable nuclear family, and conservative values and norms.

The focus on the home reflected a focus on the individual generally. Fighting Communism and ostracizing subversives was part of the conformity of the Cold War years, and, May tells us, "few Americans articulated viable alternatives to the suburban lifestyle" (166). Yet, the fight for racial equality could now be subsumed under the banner of democracy. Dudziak thus explains that "While efforts to change American society during the Cold War were usually viewed as 'un-American,' the NAACP cast its efforts at racial reform as part of the struggle against Communism" (29). Yet, again, much of this change was to be enacted individually. Thomas Hill Schaub, in *American Fiction in the Cold War*, argues that there was a shift in "focus away from purely social and economic sources of historical change and emphasized instead psychological and behavioral categories like 'anxiety' and 'conformity,' which cut across class divisions and became dominant analytical terms in the fifties" (17). Thus, while the war brought on

the successful assimilation of European ethnic minorities – "The children of immigrants identified as outsiders before World War II became 'white' after the war, gaining access to the privileges and opportunities that whiteness bestowed, such as life in the suburbs" (May 11) – for racial minorities not yet invited into the suburban American dream, this individualizing of race issues in America stressed that behaviors, attitudes and beliefs could be changed, as they were for ethnic Americans, in order to gain a greater stake in democracy. The individual strategy was representative of the values of the new American liberalism at this time: a rejection of the mass movements of the 1930s;[167] a renewed faith in the capacity for the democratic process to effect change; an avoidance of "group-think"; a belief that gradualism was the right strategy for improving racial equality; and the supposition that a "tough-minded," "manly" rebellious spirit would ward off threats to democracy – such as Communism, homosexuality, and momism.[168]

Racial minorities, in other words, were promised increased equality and tolerance at the same time that they were pressured to conform to white domestic

---

[167] As Sean McCann, in *Gumshoe America*, explains, "For black leaders and sympathetic liberals in the thirties and early forties, in other words, the best strategy for racial justice was to cast African Americans as workers and Americans first and as a distinct minority later, if at all. By the mid-fifties, however, much of that thinking had begun to change. The last black migration to Northern cities during and after the war prompted many white workers to back away from the rhetoric of class solidarity that flourished in the / late thirties, a move echoed by Southern Democratic secession from the New Deal coalition and by growing conservative hostility to the liberal pursuit of social welfare. At the same time, the developing nature of postwar liberalism and the influence of the Cold War moved political opinion away from the language of economic collectivism that had been prominent during the New Deal" (258-9).

[168] See May, page 91-111. It is well-established that homosexuality was considered an entry point for Communist infiltration in the U.S. For more on the Lavender Scare, see *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* by David K. Johnson and *Guys like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics* by Michael Davidson. At the same time, mothers were thought to bear responsibility for raising tough boys who would not fall prey to subversives. See my discussion below.

norms and rise above the conditions of poverty and limited opportunity. Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946) and José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho* (1959) create fictional encounters not only with the high standards of entry into the mainstream, but also with the misrepresentation that suggests that sacrifice for or conformity to wider (whiter) American values could supersede race as an organizing principle and as a social determiner in the U.S. In creating characters that are at once precocious and driven as well as limited by their racial background, Petry and Villarreal expose the pressure to conform to white domestic norms and the limits to liberal tolerance in the day to day lives of their characters. Work plays a pivotal role in these texts because hard work is supposed to be the vehicle to upward mobility and security – it is supposed to provide entry into the safe and secure home of the era, which also plays a large role in these texts. As May describes it, "in the early years of the Cold War, amid a world of uncertainties brought about by World War II and its aftermath, the home seemed to offer a secure, private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world" (1). Yet, as these novels demonstrate, the racial body often determines the types of labor one can perform, which in turn determines their place – how far they can go in school, what neighborhood they can live in, and, subsequently, how secure they truly feel. The characters in these texts labor to achieve the secure home, but the racial body limits the potential for that labor to be transformative, limits the ability for hard work to be the model for successful entry into the mainstream.

Security and Scarcity: Modeling Uplift in *The Street*

Ann Petry's *The Street* tells the story of Lutie Johnson's failed efforts to gain access to the privacy and safety of the American home. She works diligently, she plans and tries to save a portion of her small salary, but, in the end, her efforts to provide for herself and her son are frustrated by the manifestations of white power in Harlem in the 1940s. *The Street* has garnered a variety of critical responses, most of which attempt to understand how Lutie, as a black woman in the twentieth century, could swallow the line that everybody has a chance at the American dream so long as you work for it. Critics vacillate between seeing Lutie as blind to her own limitations, as an exemplar of how racism and sexism structure opportunities in America, and as a resistant character who challenges the subjugation she faces. For example, You-me Park and Gayle Wald say that "Insofar as Lutie's American dream enshrines wealth rather than social justice as the privileged object of individual ambition and the measure of civic virtue, *The Street* suggests, Lutie is ideologically trapped, complicit with the social forces that oppress her and whose power lies largely beyond her control" (618).[169] Whereas Bernard Bell argues that "*The Street* is a conventional novel of economic determinism in which the environment is the dominant force against which the characters must struggle to survive" (107).[170] Finally, William Scott suggests that "*The Street* should be read as a story not just about one woman's subjugation and degradation by forces beyond her control but a story about acts of material resistance, as well as the various forms—at

[169] For similar readings, see also: Nellie Y. McKay, page 130; Keith Clark, page 499; Marjorie Pryse, page 117; and Michele Crescenzo, page 217.
[170] For similar readings, see also: Vernon Lattin, page 69; Carol E. Henderson, page 854; and Kecia Driver McBride, page 305.

times inconspicuous to the point of being virtually illegible—that this resistance may take in an apparently hopeless and predetermined environment" (93).[171] This variance among critics is indicative of the critical history of *The Street* and, I believe, reflects the vacillation that Lutie experiences between determined efforts to get off the street, hopelessness as to her chances to do so, and resistant behaviors that seem to exonerate her from charges of being "wholly uncritical of the white models" of success or as "anesthetized by the nectar of the American Dream" (McKay 135, Clark 501).

Lutie Johnson's first action in *The Street* is to find an apartment. She has been living with her father, Pop; Lil, one of his girlfriends; and roomers that come and go. In her move from Pop's place to a place of her own, she seems to adhere to a vision of the American dream that is about capital (both actual and cultural) accumulation. Petry writes, "Now that she had this apartment, she was just one step farther up on the ladder of success. With the apartment Bub [her son] would be standing a better chance, for he'd be away from Lil" (26). Here Petry implies that Lutie believes there is safety inherent in the single family home that she could not find in the familial structure modeled in her father's apartment. This sentiment purposefully ignores Lutie's own recognition that the apartment, which she can barely afford, is small, dark, and located on a street that she does not trust. Another instance of Lutie's seemingly "blind" optimism stems from her domestic service for the wealthy Chandlers. Petry writes, "After a year of listening to their talk, she absorbed some of the same spirit. The belief

[171] For similar readings, see also William Scott, page 111; and Irving Solomon and Marty Ambrose, pages 4-6.

that anybody could be rich if he wanted to and worked hard enough and figured it out carefully enough" (43). Taken on its own, this statement suggests that Lutie is unaware that the wealthy, white Chandlers are not a viable model for her to emulate. Yet, Lutie notes that this is how the Pizzinis, an Italian immigrant couple who own a small shop but managed to send their daughter to college, succeeded, thus aligning her not only with wealthy, white America but also with white ethnic models of success. Proponents of racial equality in this era believed that racial minorities could emulate white ethnic models of success.

Petry also characterizes Lutie as someone who understands the deterministic sense of the gender and racial oppression that she faces, which suggests that she is not "blind" to the limitations society places on her. Petry writes, "And Lutie thought, No one could live on a street like this and stay decent. It would get them sooner or later, for it sucked the humanity out of people – slowly, surely, inevitably" (229). Petry also has Lutie compare northern cities to a lynch mob: "The street like the one she lived on were no accident. They were the North's lynch mobs, she thought bitterly; the method the big cities used to keep Negroes in their place" (323). These revelations run counter to the optimism of Lutie's finding an apartment and dreaming of a safe space for her child. At the same time, since Lutie cannot give up her resentment towards whites and racism, she cannot therefore be blind to the limitations of the (white) American dream. Thus, in the end, when Lutie kills Boots Smith for suggesting she sleep with a white man, Junto, in order to get out of the vortex of the street, Lutie "was striking, not at Boots Smith,

but at a handy, anonymous figure […]" that represented all of the impersonal forces that kept her impoverished, overworked, and at the mercy of those more powerful than herself (429). Finally, Lutie also exhibits a capacity to resist the seemingly deterministic forces that bind her. *The Street* is filled with everyday forms of resistance that Lutie employs: she declines to wear Mrs. Chandler's brand new hand-me-downs out of a sense of pride (50); she refuses to take money from the white butcher's hands (62); she throws an inkwell at a white talent agent's face after he sexually harasses her (322); and she continually resists the offer to sleep with white men in order to attain economic stability. Thus, when Lutie thinks, "She had come this far poor and black and shut out as though a door had been slammed in her face. Well, she would shove it open; she would beat and bang on it and push against it and use a chisel in order to get it open" (186), it reflects her determination to resist the notion that only whites can exhibit virtue, hard work, ingenuity, and moral superiority.

Much critical attention is also given to the presence of Benjamin Franklin in *The Street*. A paragon of the rags-to-riches motif, Franklin represents the spirit of meritocracy and class mobility in America. Lutie, carrying some loaves of bread down a busy street early in the novel, associates herself with this American icon, but reminds herself that "you're in Harlem and he was in Philadelphia a pretty long number of years ago" (64), which immediately serves to partition her from the freedoms that he experienced in making something of himself. But Petry continues: "Yet she couldn't get rid of the feeling of self-confidence and she went on thinking that if Ben Franklin could

live on a little bit of money and could prosper, then so could she" (64). Lutie's contemplation makes saving money and prospering seem easy compared to her difficulties at saving enough to get her apartment. Yet, directly following this scene Lutie begins one of many ruminations about the possibility for black women to work (particularly as domestics) and the impossibility for black men to be employed. The contemplation of this gendered and racial inequality distances black women as those who serve from Ben Franklin, who escaped his servitude and was able to remake himself. And, immediately following her contemplation of the employment roles available for blacks, Lutie comes upon Bub working a shoeshine box. Instead of associating his efforts to raise money with the thrift and ingenuity of Franklin, Lutie sees it as social conditioning. Petry writes, "It was like conditioning them beforehand for the rôle [sic] they were supposed to play. If they start out young like this shining shoes, they'll take it for granted they've got to sweep floors and mop stairs the rest of their lives" (66). Thus, while Petry aligns Lutie's motivations with an ideal vision of Ben Franklin, she immediately undercuts (within two pages of a 436-page novel) this vision with two different forms of labor and gender oppression in the black community in Harlem.

Critics, however, for the most part, tend to view Lutie's connection to Franklin as the source underlying all of her impulses toward attainment of the American dream and

argue that Lutie is, therefore, naïve and doomed to failure.[172] Pryse, for example, writes that "The precise nature of the social criticism Petry offers in *The Street* relies on the reader's recognition of Lutie's references to Franklin and, even more, on our ability to place these references within the context of American idealism, expressed by Franklin—and others—whom we consider our 'Founding Fathers'" (117). [173] And Crescenzo argues that "Lutie's misplaced reliance on the myth of the American dream, especially her unquestioning acceptance of Franklin's autobiography as a prototype for her own success, clearly forms the crux of the novel" (215). Meg Wesling, on the other hand, argues that Petry uses the Franklin myth in order to show how unattainable it was for black women and to undermine the stability of Franklin's place in the American literary canon (118, 130). Wesling also argues that "In aligning Lutie's economic hardship with the 'poverty and obscurity' from which one of the Founding Fathers emerged, Petry demonstrates how the seduction of normativity—in other words, the desire for the privileges of abstract citizenship—are not accidental but part of the persuasive cultural education that the reproduction of Franklin's story perpetuates" (128). This focus on Franklin not only denies Lutie's immediate switch to her present conditions when contemplating him as a model, but also fails to see the cultural confluences between what Franklin represents and nature of the promise of the American dream in the war

[172] Petry does, indeed, heavily reference Franklin's *Autobiography*. Beyond mentioning the book, for example, she also names Lutie's employers the Chandlers – Franklin's first trade was candle-making. Similarly, Junto, the white business man largely responsible for Lutie's downfall, is the name of Franklin's social club. For a more detailed elaboration of these confluences, see Wesling, Paniccia, Pryse, and Lorna Fitzsimmons.

[173] See also: Scott, page 89; Johanna X. K. Garvey, page 134; Lattin, page 69; and Carden Paniccia, page 81.

and postwar eras. In other words, "Franklin" may represent not only Franklin himself, along with the Founding Fathers, but also their contemporary iterations in the promises of democracy, prosperity, and reward for sacrifice that characterize the era.

Some recent critics of Petry's work have situated her within the war and postwar era, and of particular interest here is her work for Harlem newspapers in the 1940s.[174] Alex Lubin tells us that "In 1941, Petry joined the staff of Harlem *People's Voice* and edited the women's pages and wrote news stories. The *People's Voice* (PV) was one of the most radical newspapers; it was edited by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and was an epicenter of left activity" (7).[175] And Bill Mullen adds that the "*People's Voice* in fact was to the Left of the war-time politics of African American papers like the *Chicago Defender* and *Amsterdam News*, openly employing a progressive editorial rhetoric to signal the influence of Communist Party thought and influence on Harlem" (40).[176] It should be noted, however, that during the war the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) was anti-Fascist and, after Germany attacked the U.S.S.R. in 1941, was one of the biggest supporters of the war. The "popular front" mentality of the 1930s continued into the war years, where the Communist and Communist-sympathizing press (including the *People's Voice*) tied a victory over fascism to a victory of democracy. Thus,

---

[174] See Alex Lubin's (ed.) *Revising the Blue Print: Ann Petry and the Literary Left*.
[175] Powell also placed importance on the concept of a safe home. Cohen writes, "Community leader Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., contended that the uprising [the 1943 Harlem riot] came out of 'blind, smoldering and unorganized' resentment at oppression, particularly 'the unusual high rents and cost of living forced upon Negroes in Harlem'" (96).
[176] Rachel Peterson also writes, "After a short period in the *Amsterdam News* office, Petry worked as a regular columnist and occasional reporter for *People's Voice* from 1942-1944, and many of the newspaper's philosophies emerge in Petry's fiction" (77).

the *People's Voice* supported the war and its black troops. Adam Clayton Powell, in editorializing on the mistreatment of black army nurses, says, "In the midst of this campaign of terrorism, in the midst of a poll tax filibuster, I still have faith that democracy is going to come through not only victorious but purified" ("Soapbox," 21 Nov 1942, 5). Speaking to the Unity for Victory Conference (sponsored by the NAACP) in 1943, Powell announced that "This is our war […] and we don't intend to let anybody take it from us" ("Either" 8). The *People's Voice* writes of Powell that "he has fought for the principles he believes Negro Americans should live for and foster—the principles that mean freedom to live as human beings; to take full and equal part in the democracy this nation boasts of, to hold decent jobs" ("Letter" 3). Thus Powell himself is characterized as a soldier for democracy. At the same time, Ann Petry's column, "On the Lighter Side," in the *People Voice*, beyond reporting Harlem socialite news, reported often on individual and organized efforts on behalf of the war.[177] Petry also wrote an article entitled "U.S. Will Fail as World Leader if Ruled by Jimcro—Mrs. FDR." This article discusses speeches from Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune. Petry reports that Mrs. Roosevelt believes that a U.S. victory depends on "how much we're going to recognize human beings as human beings" (7); note that this is the same language Powell uses above. She also quotes Bethune as saying, "brown Americans are giving up

[177] For example, in an October 17, 1942 column, she reports on leaders of the civilian defense (16). In her October 24, 1942 column, she reports on the *Education Aids Defense* slogan (21). In her November 7, 1942 column, she reports on the flag-raising day and on the American Women's Voluntary Services (16). In her November 21, 1942 column she reports on her own attendance at the Four Freedoms Rally (28). In her January 9, 1943 column, she comments positively on the Navy starting to promote blacks to the position of officer (26). In her April 3, 1943 column she calls for volunteers for the Civil Defense Volunteer Office (22).

everything for the Democracy we are fighting for" (7). Thus, while the *People's Voice* may be tied to left-leaning politics and to the Communist party, the newspaper (and Petry's role for it) proves to be pro-democracy and pro-war (specifically with evidence of gains for African Americans). These sentiments persisted in the *People's Voice* throughout the duration of the war.[178]

Yet, Petry's novel does not manifest a Communist bent nor does it mention the highly charged race riots of 1943.[179] Instead, as Petry discusses in her 1950 "The Novel as Social Criticism," "The novel, like all other forms of art, will always reflect the political, economic, and social structure of the period in which it was created" (33). She further writes:

> I think it would make more sense if some of the fictional emphasis on social Problems were attributed to the influence of the Old Testament […] True, it is an idea that has been corrupted in a thousand ways—sometimes it has been offered to the world as socialism, and then again as Communism. It was used to

[178] The *People's Voice* also had showed its support for the war effort with countless photojournalism pieces praising war workers and soldiers. See, for example, "God Bless Our Boys in the Service of Our Country" (1942), "Fort Clark, Texas … Cavalrymen of the New All-Negro Second Calvary Division at Work with their Horses and Equipment" (1943), "Democracy at Work in a New York War Plant" (1943), "Soldiers, Sailors, Salvage and V for Victory" (1943), "The Job of Being a WAC" (1943), and "Hi-Ya Soldier!" (1945).

[179] Petry's 1947 short story, "In Darkness and Confusion," does directly confront the Harlem race riots, however. In regards to *The Street*, Lucy Robin argues that "The tensions leading to the [1943 Harlem] riot form the backdrop of *The Street*, and, […] these and the riot itself are the catalyst for the particular insights of her black, female, and working-class protagonists" (3). Indeed, the Negro Labor Victory Committee called for national unity after the riots and suggested these demands as part of the "win-the-war program" and to prevent further rioting: "the abolishing of segregation in the armed forces; the enforcement of price ceilings; the institution of rent control in NYC; the improvement of housing conditions; the provision of additional playground and recreational centers" ("Brooklyn" 6). All of these concerns show up in Lutie's life in *The Street*.

> justify the Inquisition of the Roman Church in Spain, the burning of witches in New England, the institution of slavery in the South. (34)

Here, Petry distances herself from labels while suggesting that her work should best be situated in the time that it was produced.[180] Towards the war's end, sentiments in the black community ranged from full support of the war effort, to support for the war only if it meant changes in race relations at home, to suspicion or cynicism about the potential of sacrifice for one's country to be transformative, and, finally, to rejection of what were seen as false promises for increased racial tolerance after the war.[181] *The Street* manifests some of this vacillation in the vacillation of the main character, but ultimately refuses to play into the wartime propaganda calls for unity.

Yet, wartime and postwar propaganda did promise jobs, improved housing, and the potential for full citizenship after the war. Frank Crosswaith, writing in *The Crisis* in 1945, ties the concept of democracy to housing and employment: "It should now be a fundamental conception of democracy that every individual should have the ability to buy the essentials of good clothing and good food, and to provide good shelter" (195). The delineation of what democracy means here also represents an ideal democracy, as noted above, that characterizes the goals of the white majority in this era: housing, employment, and security. The concept of the home was tied to patriotism and the

---

[180] She also distances herself from Communism when she writes, "Being a product of the twentieth century (Hitler, atomic energy, Hiroshima, Buchenwald, Mussolini, USSR) I find it difficult to subscribe to the idea that art exists for art's sake. It seems to me that all truly great art is propaganda […]" (33).

[181] It should be noted that Powell seems to exhibit all of these stances across the war years in his editorials for *People's Voice*.

attainment of a home was considered the reward for sacrifice. Cohen tells us that, during the war, "An ad for Eureka vacuum cleaners not only promised women better machines at war's end, but assured them that in 'fighting for freedom and all that means to women everywhere, you're fighting for a little house of your own, and a husband to meet every night at the door'" (74). Thus, the reward of the home, and the consumerist and gender norms that seem to go with it, was present in wartime rhetoric ranging from black activism to white-directed advertisements, at the same time that the Communism and socialism of the 1930s was giving way to celebrations of democracy's potential.[182] And while liberalism's promises of improved conditions for racial minorities in America may have had to compete with the fact that these promises were not readily achievable by racial minorities, the promises were nonetheless there and comprise a major portion of *The Street*'s focus. Richard Yarborough contends that

> Despite severe disappointments […] Afro-Americans have generally been among the most fervent believers in the American Dream. The primary source of this stubborn faith lies, oddly enough, in the very racial prejudice which so sorely tests it. Most blacks perceive that it is because of their race that they have been refused entrance into the American *sanctum sanctorum*, that imaginary arena of freedom and fair play where an individual may prove his or her worth and, upon

[182] Connecting the war effort to the attainment of democracy, Adam Clayton Powell writes, "This is our day. This is Democracy's day. If here and now we make Democracy work we need not fear about there and then. If here and now, right home, Democracy becomes a reality, this war will not only be brought to a speedier conclusion but a permanent victory will be achieved. Any man or woman who dares stand in the way of the people's movement is an Uncle Tom, a saboteur of race rights, a Fifth-columnist against Democracy" ("Soapbox," 12 Dec 1942, 5).

> doing so, earn the security, peace, material comforts, and happiness identified with success in the United States. (33)

It is Lutie's engagement with these promises, that hard work and sacrifice will get you a safe and happy home, which both situates her in mid-1940s America and provides the basis for Petry's critique.

Lutie's immediate goal, as the novel begins, is to find an apartment that she can afford, but the long term goal that she keeps aspiring to is for a house that is bright, safe, and affordable. She and Jim, her husband, had had a home, but they lost it because Jim, as a black man, was unable to find work. Their marital troubles begin when Lutie must leave the home to find work. Lutie's position as breadwinner places emphasis on the gender expectations of American society – that men work and women raise children – at the same time that it highlights how labor is tied to gender and race. In recounting the break-up of her marriage, Lutie thinks, "when she and Jim got married it looked as though it should have been a happy, successful marriage" (168). They have a home, they have a child, but Jim cannot find work. Petry writes, "So day by day, month by month, big broad-shouldered Jim Johnson went to pieces because there wasn't any work for him and he couldn't earn anything at all. He got used to facing the fact that he couldn't support his wife and child. It ate into him. Slowly, bit by bit, it undermined his belief in himself until he could no longer bear it" (168). This is a theme that Petry returns to again and again in *The Street*, sometimes focusing on men's inability to work and other times focusing on the fact that women are "overburdened, overworked, their own

homes neglected while they looked after someone else's" (65). Like Frank in *Go for Broke!*, Jim's inability to find suitable work devalues and emasculates him according to the white gender norms of the day. Thus, despite the potential to dream about the promises offered to minorities (and, consequently, all Americans) in return for their wartime sacrifices, the labor available to blacks (and other racial minorities) at this time mostly failed to transform their conditions.

Petry spells out the fact that the gender expectations of larger white society and the American dream of homeownership are both thwarted by the racism that limits the opportunities for blacks in the labor force. In this case, labor, the sacrifice that is supposed to lead to the secure home, must be performed by black women who make far less than men, particularly white men.[183] Additionally, unlike the highly visible labor of the men of the 442nd in *Go for Broke!*, the labor of black domestic goes highly undervalued and underrepresented in American popular imagination. Lutie's labor, in this case, actually impedes her success: Lutie's first home, the one she shares with her husband, is lost. Her marriage then ends due to her having to work—which is labor that goes into maintaining the home of a white woman. Lutie, sitting on a train car, gazes at an advertisement for a sink and she sees "a miracle of a kitchen," but, more importantly, she sees "a girl with incredible blond hair. The girl leaned close to a dark-

[183] May writes, "For every dollar earned by white men during the depression, white women earned 61 cents while black women earned only 23 cents. Nine out of ten employed black women were either domestics or agricultural workers and therefore exempt from most New Deal benefits, which blatantly discriminated against blacks, women, southerners, and rural laborers" (41). She also notes that "In 1939, the median annual income of women was $568—and / $246 for black women—compared to $962 for men" (67).

haired, smiling man in a navy uniform" (28). Instead of seeing herself in this image of the model American dream, Lutie thinks, "that kitchen sink in the advertisement or one just like it was what had wrecked her and Jim" (30). Cohen, discussing wartime promises in advertisement, writes: "The blue-eyed, blond-haired women who smiled out from OPA [Office of Price Administration] posters, authoritatively instructing Americans how to fight the war on the home front, were seeking eye contact primarily with other white women" (87). As in these OPA posters, the woman and man in this ad are seeking a white audience. Thus, Petry's critique, here, reflects the inability for blacks to participate in the "model home" lifestyle, because they are prohibited on all sides: the invitation to live the lifestyle pictured is not directed at them, black men cannot find employment, black women's jobs do not pay well, and having the gender roles of larger society reversed in black culture breaks up the home in ways that are psychologically damaging to both genders. Additionally, focusing so much attention, as *The Street* does, on black female laborers and how their need to work disrupts their ability to mother, calls into question the universality of the male breadwinner and female homemaker ideal that is envisioned in *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* and elsewhere. While it pictures "Mr. Civilian" working to save home and family, *The Street* casts black women in this role. And, as Petry's critique entails, the bulk of black female labor works to bolster the ability of whites to achieve their domestic dream home.

Petry suggests that Lutie's inability to make more money is responsible for her inability to acquire a safe and secure home, and ties both of these limitations to her

race. After Lutie leaves Jim, she moves in with Pop, her father, and with "grim persistence," finds a job in a steam laundry, while she studies to become a civil servant. Petry writes, "For she had made up her mind that she wasn't going to wash dishes or work in a laundry in order to earn a living for herself and Bub" (55). She pushes through for four years at the laundry, while studying to take civil service exam after civil service exam, and reminding "herself of all the people who had got somewhere in spite of the odds against them" (55). Thus, even as Petry informs readers that Lutie's race is her biggest drawback toward good employment, she also shows how Lutie is supposed to want reward for her sacrifice. Just as the men in *Go for Broke!*, Lutie expects that her hard work will be recognized. Lutie imagines herself fulfilling the American dream when she thinks, "First a white-collar job, then an apartment of her own where she and Bub would be by themselves" (56). Yet, while Lutie's attitude could be attributed to the African American uplift model that suggests individual gains will advance the whole, this impulse to white collar work is, here, a stance Lutie takes against racial oppression. She tells Bub, "White people seem to think that's [scrubbing floors and washing clothes] the only kind of work they're [black people] fit to do. The hard work. The dirty work. The work that pays the least" (70).[184] Thus, while many critics view Lutie's persistence as her inability to see beyond the Franklinian American dream, her desire for white collar work and to avoid menial labor place her squarely within the wartime sense of expectation

[184] Pop, who sells bootlegged liquor, has a more defiant relationship to employment: "Sometimes Pop would try to get a regular steady job and would return home after a few hours to spend the rest of the day, saying wrathfully, 'White folks just ain't no damn good.' Then he would start mixing a new batch of his buckjuice as he called it, muttering, 'Can't get no job. White folks got 'em all'" (80).

and optimism for racial advancement – both economically and socially – without placing her in the uplift model, as exemplified at the end of *Pinky*. Lutie's quest for better housing mirrors the civil rights goals of wartime Harlemites to extend federal housing initiatives to include housing for black populations.[185]

Her white collar employment and her new apartment, however, do not provide the transformation she had hoped for. At her new place, there is not "a playground or a park for blocks around!" (78).[186] And, when she considers moving, she realizes that her limited pay and employment opportunities, not to mention her race and gender, still keep her in a run-down dwelling in Harlem: "No matter where she moved, if twenty-nine dollars was all the rent she could pay, why, she would simply be changing her address, for the place she moved into would be exactly like the one she moved out of" (79). With each opportunity that Lutie either imagines or is offered in the course of the novel, her first thought is always about a better place to live.[187] Petry critiques the system that promises a better place, but refuses to allow blacks to realize those promises. When Lutie walks through a neighborhood other than Harlem, she thinks, "This was, by comparison, a safe, secure, clean world. And looking at it, she thought it

---

[185] See, for example, the *People's Voice* article from 1942, "Equal Facilities for Negroes Urged by Housing Group," where the author tells us that the National Committee on the Housing Emergency "urges that equal housing for Negro war workers be provided" (43).

[186] One of the first demands made by The City-Wide Citizen's Committee on Harlem after the Harlem riot of 1943 was for the "Immediate opening of playgrounds, recreational facilities and summer schools in the Harlem area" (City-Wide).

[187] Llewellyn Ransom, reporting on high rents in Harlem writes, "No matter how much Negroes resent high rents, when father begins to stay home to take Johnny to Court, when Mary comes home from high school with a look in her eyes that longs for something better than a novel, or when mother's cough fails to improve, they all begin to find ways to pay for a little better place" (3).

must be rather pleasant to be able to live anywhere you wanted to, just so you could pay the rent, instead of having to find out first whether it was a place where colored people were permitted to live" (408).[188] This anti-segregationist thinking places priority on improved employment and housing opportunities for blacks and questions the racist system that charges blacks more rent to live in less desirable housing in segregated neighborhoods.[189]

Housing and employment were major concerns in Harlem in the 1940s as the wide coverage of the issue in both the black press and in more mainstream news outlets attests to. In a 1941 *New York Times* article, Alice Citron declares that Harlem has "the most wretched of housing conditions" (22). A 1944 memo from the NAACP tells us that "In 1940, two out of every three urban homes occupied by Negroes were substandard" ("Memorandum" 1). When the City-Wide Citizens Committee on Harlem prepared a report on Crime and Delinquency in 1942, the first recommendation was to "Reduce discrimination in employment" and the second was the construction of "more low-rent housing" (28). The *People's Voice* widely reported on the substandard condition of Harlem housing and the formation of tenants' organizations and the need for OPA rent

[188] May writes, "People of color were excluded from the vast majority of [...] suburban communities and were denied the benefits of American prosperity even if they could afford them" (9).
[189] May tells us, "Provided they were white, veterans could buy homes in Levittown, with a thirty-year mortgage and no down payment, by spending only $56 per month. At the same time, the average apartment rental in many cities was $93. These overpriced, often substandard apartments were left to Americans of color, who were excluded from the suburbs" (161). Charles Williams in 1943 reported in *The Nation* that "Though Harlem contains New York's worst slums, rents are higher there than elsewhere in the city—this, you are told, is part of the 'tax on being black.' Food prices are higher, too, although Harlem housewives complain that only the poorest grades of food are sold there" (86-7). See also Llewllyn Ramsom's "Landlords Say Rents Are Fair In Proportion to their Taxes … But their Taxes go up Only After the House Income Rises."

ceilings.[190] Yet, the WWII homefront is typically understood as having increased opportunities for women and people of color in better paying occupations.[191] In addition, much as the soldiers are characterized in *Go for Broke!*, working for "the war effort" was considered a sacrifice and duty that all Americans could perform. The Rosie the Riveter and OPA posters (see above) attest to a widespread campaign to motivate nonmilitary personnel to do their part for the war effort. Yet, Lutie's civil service job is not the result of wartime improvements. At the same time, there is no mention at all of *sacrifice*, or patriotism for that matter, for the war effort despite the fact that Petry mentions the war on several occasions.[192] In other words, the street in Petry's novel cannot, as Paniccia suggests, "be located in almost any national place and time, its conditions applicable to virtually any national moment" (90),[193] but instead should be viewed in its time and place in wartime Harlem – a time of high expectation and low results for the black community. For example, despite propaganda praising wartime unity and a spirit of pulling together as Americans, Harlemites had to petition the Office of Price Administration for a rent ceiling (1942) and for lower food costs (1943); these

[190] See, for example, "Concert Benefits Tenant Organization" (1942), "All Classes Fighting Rent Inequalities" (1942), "Local Landlords Join to Block Rent Cuts" (1942), "A 'Walled' City for Aryans in Manhattan" (1943), and "Tenant League Public Meeting to Start Fight on High Rents" (1943).
[191] The front cover of the December 5, 1942 issue of *People's Voice* reads "Here's Your Chance: Defense Job Training is Brought to Harlem" (1). See also "War Job Boom will give Work to Harlemites" (1943).
[192] The *People's Voice* also makes several mentions of women and war work. See, for example, "Wanna be a WAM? Go to Jersey City" (1942), "Negroes Finding More War Jobs" (1942), "Two Negro WAACs Promoted to First Lieutenant Posts" (1943), and "1943 Will See War Jobs Open for Negro Workers" (1943).
[193] The quote continues: "For black women, Petry suggests, 'the street' is America" (90).

were programs that were well established in white areas of the country ("Rent" 34, "OPA" 13).

Petry's mention of the fact of WWII in *The Street* is subtle, but it never implies that Harlemites are excited to participate in the war effort or that social or economic gains have resulted from increased opportunities (real or imagined). Petry details a long drive that Lutie and Boots Smith take. Petry notes that driving a car fast and reckless gives Boots a sense of power: "Because in that one moment of passing a white man in a car they could feel good and the good feeling would last long enough so that they could hold their heads up the next day and the day after that" (158). Lutie thinks, "at this moment he has forgotten he's black" (158). This sense of power is not solely derived from the speed at which he drives, however, and can be attributed to his ability to take a fast, purposeless cruise in a time of rubber and gas rationing.[194] Lutie asks, "How do you get gas?" and "But why weren't you drafted?" (164, 165), which, in this instance, are questions produced more out of curiosity than out of anger for breaking wartime restrictions. Unlike the directive in the *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* that asks moviemakers to shame those who would break wartime restrictions, Petry does not align her character with those who would make "The

[194] In Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Bob Jones, the protagonist, has a similar relationship with driving. Jones thinks, "I had a '42 Buick Roadmaster I'd bought four months ago [...] and every time I got behind the wheel and looked down over the broad, flat, mile-long hood I thought about how the rich white folks out in Beverly couldn't even buy a new car now and got a certain satisfaction" (10). In driving to work he notes, "If I'd been a white boy I might have enjoyed the scramble in the early morning sun, the tight competition for a twenty-foot lead on a thirty-mile highway. But to me it was racial [...] all I wanted in the world was to push my Buick Roadmaster over some peckerwood's face" (14). See also: Cotton Seiler's "'So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By': African American Automobility and Cold War Liberalism."

backslider […] feel the full weight of public condemnation." Lutie, who is characterized by critics as fully accepting white models for success, does not object to Boots's breaking of wartime restrictions or draft avoidance.

Boots's ability to avoid the draft is explained in a conversation he remembers having with Junto. Boots asks Junto to "fix" the problem[195] when he received his draft notice and Junto asks why Boots does not want to fight. Boots says, "Because, no matter how scared they are of Germans, they're still more scared of me. I'm black, see? And they hate Germans, but they hate me worse. If that wasn't so they wouldn't have a separate army for black men. That's one for the books. Sending a black army to Europe to fight Germans. Mostly with brooms and shovels" (258-59).[196] When Junto asks if Boots would fight if the army weren't segregated, Boots replies, "Hell, no […] For me to go leaping and running to that draft board a lot of things would have to be different. Them white guys in the army are fighting for something. I ain't got anything to fight for. If I wasn't working for you, I'd be changing sheets on Pullman berths. And learning fresh all over again every day that I didn't belong anywhere" (259). Unlike the men in *Go for Broke!* who look to change their position via military service, Boots refuses to serve

---

[195] By which he means getting an operation to damage his eardrum so that he is classified 4-F.
[196] The preference for Germans over blacks speaks to the displeasure expressed throughout the black press over black servicemen being denied service at establishments that would serve German POWs (see Cohen pg. 93-4). "Mostly with brooms and shovels" refers to the fact that most African American units in WWII were assigned to support positions rather than put into combat. Florence Murray reports for the *People's Voice* that "While the vast majority of Negro troops are not strictly combat units, their record is one of a vital job well done, and frequently they have had to lay down their tools and pick up arms in both defensive and offensive fighting" ("Helping … War" 14). The use of black soldiers predominantly in support positions led to a belief in blacks' inability to fight on the line (see Braker pg 12).

because of his lack of belonging and because of poor employment opportunities. Boots disavows the patriotic sentiments of both the black and white communities and, in so doing, the promise that service will be rewarded on the home front. While Boots may live in an expensive dwelling because of his well-paying job, he knows this position is rare and tenuous for a black man in America and therefore cannot commit to fight to "protect" this "way of life."[197]

Petry mentions the war in two other instances in the text. The first instance is a conversation that Bub overhears on the street. It is worth quoting at length:

> "Sure, sure, I know," the man in overalls said impatiently. "I been in a war. I know what I'm talking about. There'll be trouble when them colored boys come back. They ain't going to put up with all this stuff" – he waved toward the street. His hand made a wide, all-inclusive gesture that took in the buildings, the garbage cans, the pools of water, even the people passing by.
>
> "What they going to do about it?" said the other man. "They're going to change it. You watch what I tell you. They're going to change it." "Been like this all these years, ain't nothing a bunch of hungry soldiers can do about it."
>
> "Don't tell me, man. I know. I was in the last war." "What's that got to do with it? What did you change when you come back? They're going to come back with their bellies full of gas and starve just like they done before—" "They

[197] As a matter of fact, Boots is all too aware that Junto can ruin his career entirely. Boots thinks: "Junto could break him all right. It would be easy. There weren't many places a colored band could play and Junto could fix it so he couldn't find a spot from here to the coast" (264).

ain't using gas in this war. That's where you're wrong. They ain't using gas—"

(338-39)

The dialog has an overarching sense of pessimism. When the first man describes what needs changing, his "all-inclusive gesture" encompasses the whole street – evidence of low-paying jobs, poor housing conditions, and the people damaged by racism. The cynicism of the second man, which sets the tone for the conversation, is validated when they point out that WWI did not result in any changes they could see. At the same time, that the conversation veers off into a discussion about nerve gas instead of a contemplation of solutions, suggests the need for organization and, therefore, the limitations of the existing movements for social and legal advancement.

In the last instance that Petry mentions the war, she shows how wartime service and sacrifice do not get blacks out of the cycle that keeps Lutie from achieving a modicum of success. After Lutie learns that Bub has been arrested for stealing mail,[198] Petry writes, "Her thoughts were like a chorus chanting inside her head. The men stood around and the women worked. Then men left the women and the women went on working and the kids were left alone. The kids burned lights all night because they were alone in small, dark rooms and they were afraid" (388). Here, Lutie contemplates the break-up of the black home due to limited job opportunities for black men; the result is a child with insecurities and fears instead of a home where one can feel safe and secure. Petry continues, "The women work because the white folks give them jobs [… and]

[198] This is a plot derived by Jones, Lutie's superintendent, to get back at Lutie for denying his sexual advances. Bub goes in for it out of concern for Lutie because she complains of having little money.

because for years now the white folks haven't liked to give black men jobs that paid enough for them to support their families. And finally it gets to be too late for some of them. Even wars don't change it. The men get out of the habit of working and the houses are old and gloomy and the walls press in" (388-89). Here, Petry ties housing and employment conditions directly to the racism of whites and denies the potential effect that wartime service could have on this cycle. *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* encourages that the representative white male, Bill Smith,[199] to believe that "every stamp and every bond he buys is an investment in America's future […] If we win the war, his money will come back to him as a nest-egg that will help build a house, buy a car, provide education for his children, or pay for travel – in a peaceful world." But Lutie, having recognized that the "dream kitchens" were not meant for her, views the prospects for war to change housing conditions for blacks as dismal. Put another way, Petry is not talking about Franklinian democracy in this moment. This climactic moment uniquely situates Lutie in the WWII home front atmosphere, as Petry critiques the transformative potential of wartime service. While the black press both challenged and celebrated the wartime potential for social and legal gains for blacks, and encouraged its readers to buy war bonds, Petry uses the home – the (white) reward for patriotism and hard work – as evidence of the failure of those potential gains to be meted out to a hard-working and determined black woman.

[199] Bill Smith is a stand-in for an American male soldier (presumably white).

Lutie fails to establish a safe home for her son because she cannot get a job that pays enough to live anywhere else and because housing restrictions do not allow her to move to a safer and cheaper neighborhood. John Charles argues that "A central concern in Petry's early fiction is how America's racialized and sexualized division of labor has had particularly adverse affects on black women's struggle for privacy" (99). Here, privacy can be attributed to the notion of a safe home life, the lack of which causes Lutie's downfall and makes up Petry's critique of the system that promises rewards for hard work. Amanda Davis writes, "There is little safety in *The Street*, as moments of potential freedom are quickly interrupted by the social and political realities of the racial climate in the 1940s. Readers are continually presented with images of violence that circumscribe not only one's attempt to establish a home and vital homeplace, but one's physical and emotional wholeness as well" (36).[200] Instead of a safe and happy home life (seemingly possible at the beginning of her marriage), Lutie lives in a tenuous environment and is hemmed in on all sides: her superintendent tries to rape her, her neighbor wants her to go into prostitution, a white man controls her ability to get paid for singing, her son fails to receive a good education because of a racist white teacher, racism prevents her from rising within the civil service ranks, her son is lured into crime due to their poverty, and, in the end, she kills Boots Smith when he, too, tries to rape

[200] Peterson also writes, "Petry attends both the variegated forms of racism domestics encountered in the private home that [Alice] Childress and Wright describe while also emphasizing themes of loyalty, the limitations of post-war racial liberalism, the difficulties of maintaining a marriage, and the particularly disadvantaged position of those domestics separated from urban centers by their work in rural areas and small towns" (75).

her. She then abandons her son – she thus participates in the violence and neglect she sees everywhere on the street. In other words, Lutie is thrust into conditions that she does not choose; she is exposed to violence and is made part of it because she cannot get out of the cycle that keeps blacks poor and stuck in neighborhoods without parks, good schools, or adequate housing. Petry's critique, as Lutie sits on a train to Chicago wondering "What possible good it has done to teach people like me to read?" (436), is not of the will and desire to advance socially, economically, and legally, but of the system that sets the rules for advancement and then breaks its side of the bargain. Lutie may meet the high standards for entrance into the American domestic mainstream, but racism and poverty prevent her from achieving even a modicum of success.

Lutie has vacillated between accepting an uplift model, where individual advancement will result in the progress for all blacks, and rejecting the system altogether.[201] By making Lutie fail, despite forefronting her education, hard work, and desire for the American dream, Petry challenges the model of individual uplift. Unlike the Pizzini's before her, Lutie cannot overcome the challenges she faces simply through hard work, dedication, and ambition. At the same time, Petry questions the idea that

[201] Petry's Mrs. Hedges and Min are characters that have rejected many of the mainstream domestic norms. They may have given in to the conditions that surround them, but they have not given in. Mrs. Hedges runs a brothel and works for Junto and Min is a domestic worker who puts most of her efforts into getting by. For more on Min and Mrs. Hedges, see Evie Shockley's "Buried Alive: Gothic Homelessness, Black Women's Sexuality, and (Living) Death in Ann Petry's The Street," Keith Clark's "A Distaff Dream Deferred?: Ann Petry and the Art of Subversion," and Irvin D. Solomon and Marty Ambrose's "Race and Gender Conflict in Ann Petry's *The Street*: Lessons in Symbolic Interactionism from the 'Middle Period' of Black Litertature." The idea of "giving in" is prominent in the black press. The *People's Voice* reports that "As the squeeze between high rents and low incomes is increased the people resort to confidence games, 'numbers,' prostitution and petty crimes" (Ransom 3).

wartime sacrifices and patriotism will be rewarded at war's end. Florence Murray's report in Harlem's *People's Voice* shows pride in black service during wartime: "Here in the United States, Negroes have participated in all home-front activities—war work, welfare work, morale-building—whether as paid jobs or in a voluntary capacity" ("Helping … Home" 16).[202] But Petry does not enlist Lutie in the civilian ranks and obviates Lutie's lack of concern for the war or for homefront issues. Petry does not attribute Lutie's job to the war and shows no morale-building or other homefront patriotism.[203] *The Street*, I argue, therefore ties the wartime promise that patriotism and participation in the war effort will lead to social and economic advances, to the outmoded uplift model and rejects both. By refusing the uplift model and the promise that patriotism will be rewarded, she opens a space for organized protest.[204] Even as Petry directly engages with black citizenship in the form of housing, job opportunities, and security, she does not tie Lutie's hopes to a postwar expectation for full citizenship. Instead, she shows how Lutie is unable to attain success despite determined effort. As

---

[202] In the same article she notes that 3 million African Americans "were working in war or allied industries by the end of 1944" (16). Murray also notes that "The number of Negro women employed in industry almost quadrupled during the war period" (16). The *People's Voice* also often reported on the call for war work and on the presence of blacks in war industries. These were seen as gains, as proof of the success of the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), and as proof that the postwar world could be one of greater opportunities for blacks in the U.S. See, for example, "Civil Service News" and "Training Centers Listed; 'Act Now'" (1942), and "Dining Car Workers Union Important to War Effort" (1943).

[203] See, for example, "Uncle Sam Asks Housewives to Help Find Defense Workers," which clearly aligns housewives with the war effort in a way that Petry never does for Lutie or any of her other characters. See also "Mrs. Bethune Speaks Here," which states, "To focus attention upon the important role Negro women are playing in the country's war effort, the National Council of Negro Women is planning a nation-wide observance of *We Serve America* week, beginning Sunday, July 4" (2).

[204] This reflects Lubin's editorial comments in *Revising the Blue Print*, where he argues that Petry should be read "as an important link between the Popular Front and the Black Arts Movement" (6).

Yarborough writes, “In her novel, *The Street*, Ann Petry demonstrated that for Lutie Johnson, an industrious, intelligent, sensitive, and idealistic young black woman, the American Dream is impossible” (41). The violence at the end of the novel drives home Petry’s critique that because whites deny blacks the ability to rise above poverty and racism, blacks are left with homes that do not provide the security and protection promised to those who work hard and believe in a meritorious democracy. This critique is specific to a wartime America that promised homes for veterans, homes in exchange for sacrifice, and homes that represent the American nuclear family and consumerist paradise. Lutie’s grouplessness and homelessness at the end of the novel are a final critique of the inclusive feelings and sentiments of unity that pervaded the war and postwar era.

Masculinity and Momism: Revealing the Trade Off in *Pocho*

José Antonio Villarreal’s *Pocho* explores the “American home” and the work required to achieve it by a Mexican American family in Santa Clara, California. The story is set just prior to World War Two, and though published in 1959, Villarreal submitted a version of *Pocho* for publication as early as 1952 (Vallejos 283). Much like *George Washington Gómez*, *Pocho* begins with the story of a first-generation Mexican American male, Juan Rubio, and transitions to the story of the second-generation male, Richard Rubio. Both of the older male characters played a part in fighting the Mexican Revolution and/or fighting for land rights in Texas, and both novels end at the

completion of high school by the second-generation males.[205] The older characters prove their dedication to Mexico through battle, nostalgia, and resentments, while the younger characters have to grapple with the conflicts arising from their affinity toward two different cultures. This trajectory is interesting because it seems to herald an inevitable move toward assimilation/acculturation – the son will be "more American" than the father. This trajectory also signals the assimilation model of white European immigrants to the U.S. – each successive generation will become "more American" and thus will be more accepted by mainstream society and will eventually blend in.[206] Like *Go for Broke!*, *Pocho* applies this model of white ethnic assimilation to racial minorities and explores the potentials and the roadblocks of this model of assimilation. Like *The Street*, *Pocho* presents a precocious and driven protagonist who works hard and is seemingly desirous of a stable and happy home modeled on the mainstream American home.[207]

The "home," however, figures in *Pocho* in a far less physical way than in *The Street*. In *Pocho*, while the Rubios are laborers and are by no means rich, they quickly establish a home in California in a relatively safe community that is not racially

[205] Ramón Saldívar, in *Chicano Narrative*, writes that "Juan Rubio—paradigmatic hero, patriarch, and warrior, a virtual model of the stereotyped, sentimental, and reified hero of the very different Greater Mexican corrido tradition, having participated in the Revolution of 1910—finds that he must flee in defeat from Mexico to the United States. For Mexican Americans, Juan Rubio's flight dramatizes an equally important historical event: it marks the significant point in the rapid growth of Mexican communities in the American Southwest" (61).

[206] American popular culture has many iterations of the "successful" assimilation of white European immigrants to the U.S. Two that quickly come to mind are *The Jazz Singer* (1929) and *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945).

[207] Vallejos writes that "Another frequently voiced criticism is that the protagonist's level of intellectual maturity is inconsistent with his age; that is, Richard is far too precocious to be credible" (285).

homogenous. Villarreal describes the hardships that the Rubios face during the Depression, but indicates that they are more well-off than the Oakies that arrive in California to work the land – Juan even helps supply the Oakies with food and shelter, only to have them take advantage of his generosity as well as undercut Mexican workers by working for less money.[208] The Rubios do not face the same economic and racial limitations as Lutie does in Harlem. *Pocho* does, however, negotiate with the concept of the American home and the labor that establishes it – Villarreal does this via an engagement with the more ethereal visions of the home in the 1950s. Thus, *Pocho*, within the culture clash of Mexican and American traditions, has a heavy focus on the gender expectations of the "American home," the concept of cultural pluralism, and the place of racial labor in democracy, all of which place it squarely within the mainstream cultural trends that May, Cohen, and others use to describe the postwar era. Richard Rubio, like Lutie Johnson, vacillates between a belief in the ideals of American culture and a rejection of the concept that they can apply to anyone who works for them. This vacillation occurs, however, between a belief in the rightness of his family's cultural traditions versus a belief in American concepts of manhood, women's roles, and individualism. Within in this culture clash, Villarreal grapples with the "inevitability" of assimilation at the same time that he shows the violence associated when one culture dominates the other. When Villarreal writes that "the transition from the culture of the old world to that of the new should never have been attempted in one generation"

[208] See *Pocho* pg. 124-25.

(135), he challenges the process of assimilation and the U.S.'s cultural dominance even as he reveals a preference for the "new" American lifestyle over the "old" Mexican one.[209]

Pocho, while sometimes marked as the first Chicano novel to be published, is often attacked by Chicanos/as for this seeming preference for American over Mexican culture. Inma Minoves Myers argues that "While the sense of group solidarity and the spirit of militancy found in most works of the chicano [sic] literary renaissance is not present in Pocho [sic], it will always occupy an important place in the history of Chicano letters and will be considered a pioneer work in the literary renaissance of the 1970s" (Myers). Ramón Saldívar writes,

> *Pocho* has always been somewhat of an embarrassment to Chicanos. Even the preface to the Anchor paperback edition attempts to apologize for the novel. Richard's rejection of his father's values ("who the hell were his people" [162]), his statements that "codes of honor are stupid" (108), his rejection of the Catholic faith ("'I no longer believe in God,' he said … and at last he was free" [172]), and, finally, his departure at the novel's end to join the United States armed forces in the months after Pearl Harbor are seen as assimilationist tendencies, indicating an uncritical acceptance of "melting pot" theories of American immigration. (*Chicano* 65)

[209] Roberto Cantú writes, "it is erroneous to associate, as the narrator and Villarreal do, Mexican culture with the 'old world,' while equating the United States with the 'new'" (423).

Though *George Washington Gómez* tells a similar story and ends with what can be read as the total assimilation of its protagonist,[210] Américo Paredes is rarely attacked in the same way as Villarreal tends to be.[211] Manuel de Jesus Hernández-Guttierez ties Villarreal to a pre-1965 generation that "opted […] for assimilation" and writes that "Villarreal is neither a founder nor a conscious practitioner of contemporary Chicano narrative; rather, he figures as its influential but accommodationist precursor" (35). Timothy S. Sedore tells us that "By taking freely from both cultures and admitting it, Villarreal alienated himself from many in the Chicano literary/critical generation that followed him. He became a pocho, a sellout, one who, as Raymund Paredes describes the term, is alienated for being assimilated" (243).[212] Sedore adds that "*Pocho* went out of print soon after its publication in 1959, and was not reissued until 1970, in large measure, critics concluded, because its protagonist went too far to assimilate himself to U.S. American culture" (243). The general view of the work, then, suggests that it is historically valuable but typically rejected by the Chicana/o movement as a representative text.

"Pocho," is an in between term – someone who is neither Mexican nor Chicana/o. At the same time, distancing *Pocho* from the Chicano movement coincides with Villarreal's own distancing of himself from the Chicano movement. The title of the

[210] This includes joining the military, changing his name, and rejecting his family and community.
[211] I thank Brian Bremen for this observation.
[212] For discussions of the meaning of "pocho," see: Saldívar, pg. 61; Sedore, pg. 248-49; Luedtke, pg. 7; and Cantú, pg. 421;

work, then, seems to presage how critics view its author. Vallejos tells us that Villarreal "maintains a most precarious status as a Chicano writer," and that this is because

> he has repeatedly stated that he does not really identify himself as a Chicano, although he does not object strenuously to this term or its application to him. He also openly questions whether there is such a thing as "Chicano" literature, asserting that most Chicano novelists are primarily influenced by the British and American literary tradition and write in English, not Spanish. Of greater importance is the fact that Villarreal found himself at odds with the ideology, rhetoric, and methodology of the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. (284)

Thus, *Pocho*, at once heralded as a seminal text in Chicano/a literature, is also attacked by critics for its author's stance on the movement's objectives and ideologies.[213] Ramóm Saldívar suggests, on the other hand, that *Pocho*, along with Paredes's *With his Pistol in his Hand*, "changes the world of literature in general and American literature in particular by opening a place for Chicano literature" (*Chicano* 70).[214] While these types of assessments are vital to understanding the Chicano/a movement and what texts deserve to be its representatives, it does not do enough to situate or to analyze and understand *Pocho* as a literary work.

---

[213] Luther S. Luedtke writes that "In the midst of burgeoning literature, Villarreal's novel *Pocho*, published in 1959, holds a secure position not only as the first Mexican-American novel, but also as a powerful statement on the enigmas of coming-of-age in the United States" (1).

[214] The quote continues, "a place from which future Chicano authors might open up the vistas of the genre of the novel and of other narrative forms to their own significant culture" (*Chicano* 70).

One way that critics do work to situate *Pocho* is by viewing the text within the dominant cultural choices facing immigrant Mexicans and their children in the postwar era. Roberto Cantú writes that "In historical terms, *Pocho*'s settings are the closing of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Depression of the United States, and World War II. Ideologically, this novel is closely linked to the United States of the 1950s, years of individualism and conformity to the American way of life. For minorities, these were years of ethnic disguise" (420). Like Hernández-Guttierez, Cantú sees this era as one of assimilation, as one where resistant choices were harder to envision than the alternative option of downplaying of one's own culture. Carl Shirley suggests that this downplaying of a larger ethnic identity is the result of a heavy focus on the individual. He writes, "The racial conflict and prejudice [of the era] are present for all to see, but the author has chosen to center his attention on an individual, not as a representative of any group, but as Richard Rubio with his own self and his own unique mode of development and adjustment to life" (68). Ramón Saldívar also writes that "Richard acquires a shadowy, in-between identity that is formed by individualist ideologies of which he is only dimly aware" (*Chicano* 68).[215] *Pocho*'s focus on the individual further places it within the context of postwar American values, where the individual was seen as the keeper of democracy as well as the site of the potential undoing of democratic and civil responsibilities. This focus on the individual aligns with the strategies offered

[215] Ramón Saldívar also writes that "Richard wishes rather to appropriate the world to himself, and to subjugate it by shaping it with his understanding, in the commanding mode of divine self-reference, 'I *am*'" (64), further stressing the individual nature of Richard's character.

for racial advancement in *Home of the Brave* and *Pinky* and coincides with the individualist strategy for solving the "race problem" in this era. At the same time, it reflects the wider trend suggesting that individuals are responsible for upholding American democratic values in the face of challenges such as group-think, Communism, and weaknesses associated with homosexuality, deviance, and momism.

In *Pocho* the home is the primary site where the generational and cultural conflicts that Richard encounters take place and, again, Villarreal uses these conflicts and Richard's uncertainty to highlight the difficulties of a second-generation Mexican American to ascribe to and represent American domestic values. When Villarreal discusses Juan's movement to the U.S. he reminds readers that migrating Mexicans often anticipated a "Utopia" or "El Dorado" when they got to the states (16), yet Juan highly values Mexican culture and tries to instill this respect into Richard.[216] Juan, while never able to return to Mexico as he desires, tells Richard to keep the heritage alive in the United States. Juan reminds him, "do not ever forget that you are Mexican" (169). Richard is proud of being Mexican, yet he sees that identity from a culturally pluralist view. He thinks everybody was "Always worried about his being Mexican and he never even thought about it, except sometimes, when he was alone, he got kinda funnyproud [sic] about it" (107-08). Richard certainly regrets the loss of tradition in his home life. Villarreal writes, "So when he was certain the family would remain [in the U.S.], he was

[216] Villarreal writes, "And he turned to Richard and said, 'Learn, my son. Learn all you can in the English, for next year by this time we will be in our country, and your knowledge will be of great benefit to you. Of course, I want you to learn our language also. What a shame it would give me if we arrived with our people and they would think that I had a brute for a son" (96).

both elated and sad. Glad that he would be raised in America, and sad for the loss of what to him would be a release from a life that was now dull routine" (129). Villarreal also writes of Richard, "It saddened him to see the Mexican tradition begin to disappear. And because human nature is such, he, too, succumbed, and unconsciously became an active leader in the change" (132). Thus, being raised and schooled in the U.S. seems to foretell an inevitable loss of culture in *Pocho*, but, at the same time, this choice is not one that is made without regret.

A major place in the narrative where cultural conflict is explored is in the gender roles played out within the home. As May and others have argued, the home was seen as a site of safety in the 1950s, a place where aberrant desires and impulses where contained by narrowly defined roles for men and women. May writes, "The logic went as follows: National strength depended upon the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against Communist threats" (91).[217] Working and liberated women in this era were often seen as a threat, but the home would contain the potential threat that sexually aggressive working women could pose to society at the same time that a woman who fulfilled her proper role would fight Communism by reproducing society's values and containing dissent and disruptive behaviors within the home. By contrast, men were supposed to "contain" their women by being the head of the household, by sexually satisfying their wives, and by "bringing home the bacon." This mode of thinking placed a

[217] May adds, "Government propaganda urged women to go home as wives and mother, not only to release jobs for returning veterans, but also to promote the notion that the nuclear family was the foundation of democracy and had to be protected" (74).

lot of responsibility on mothers to raise manly boy-children who would not fall sway to the seductive lure of Communism and espionage. Philip Whlie's *Generation of Vipers* captures the idea of the potential threat of the aberrant woman in the term "momism."[218] Momism denotes the idea that too much power is given to the mother, who is nothing more than a frivolous and selfish woman, and that this power is destroying the children, especially the male children, she rears. Momism creates weak and passive children who are then vulnerable to Communist infiltration.[219] The responsibility of motherhood was thus tied to the maintenance of the nation. These values, like those of the home generally, were widespread[220] and pervade Richard's understanding of gender roles and the establishment of his home.

Momism and the gender roles pervasive in the 1950s butted up against the gender roles specific to Mexican families at this time. Ramón Saldívar argues that Mexican and Mexican American society at this time is marked by traditional gender roles, even as in working class families many women entered the workforce (*Chicano* 22). At the same time, Patricia Zavella argues that women in the Mexican cultural

---

[218] Wylie's work, *Generation of Vipers* (where the term first appears) was widely popular. In the 1955 edition, which commemorated the twentieth printing of the 1942 original, Wylie tells his audience that "The book has now sold more than one hundred and eighty thousand copies and its recent annual sales have approximated five thousand" (xi).

[219] May tells us that "'Momism,' according to Wylie and his many followers, was the result of frustrated women who smothered their children with overprotection and overaffection, making their sons, in particular, weak and passive. […] Wylie argued that the debilitating effects of Momism would seriously weaken the nation and make it vulnerable to an enemy takeover" (73).

[220] The classic film dealing with momism as a cultural concept is, of course, the 1955 *Rebel Without a Cause*, where James Dean's character rebels against a weak and passive father and a controlling and over-affectionate mother, only to be put "in danger" of homosexual activities due to his family instability. Being given the chance to rebel saves this youth from a "deviant" fate and provides him with a marriageable woman in the end.

tradition had a "proper place" and that "women should not enter the labor force" because they had family responsibilities such as "housework, child care, consumption, and emotional nurturance" (qtd. in Ramón Saldívar, *Chicano* 22).[221] While there is much variation among and evidence of resistance to traditional Mexican gender roles at this time, Villarreal works to establish a sense of this often rigid tradition in *Pocho*. Exhibiting the role of males in the Mexican household, Juan tells Richard, "'And you are right, also, my son, in that you are a man, and it is good, because to a Mexican being *that* is the most important thing. If you are a man, your life is half lived; what follows does not really matter … When you are older, you will marry and have a family. Then you will know why you are here. That is God's will'" (131). Juan sees himself at the head of the household and with total authority. He thinks, "A man must have a house, place his family within it, and leave no room for authority but his own, for it was the only place a man could have authority" (122). At the same time, Consuelo, Richard's mother, sees her traditional place as defined by servitude and acquiescence, even as she begins to question this relationship. Villarreal writes, "She wished that once, only once, she could sit to dinner with her family, but she could not. She must wait on them until they were finished, and not until then could she sit down. She knew this was not a great thing, but it was a part of it" (92). Consuelo's role as wife and mother becomes the barometer of

[221] In discussing the corrido, a traditional song-form of border Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Ramón Saldívar writes, "while the corrido serves as an indispensible function in the struggle on the part of the patriarchal Mexican American communities to retain their traditional culture in the face of the advancing Anglo-American hegemony, its symbolic value is decisively affected both in terms of performance and content by gender roles and specifically male values" (*Chicano* 38).

assimilation. Similarly, in *The Street*, Lutie's ability or inability to fulfill traditional gender roles becomes the barometer of the success of her marriage. In *Pocho*, it is through Consuelo's assimilation that Villarreal questions the impulse to attempt to create a stereotypical American home.

The preferred gender roles of both cultures seem very similar on the surface. Yet, when in America, Consuelo learns that she should have more independence and power than she is given by traditional Mexican family relationships. Like the threat of female independence in American postwar culture, this emancipation is seen as a threat and a detriment to both the traditional and the "new" American home. When Juan Rubio buys a house the narrator tells us that "He was unaware that he was fashioning the last link of events that would bind him to America and the American way of life" (129). When he buys this home, he links not just to the American domestic dream that it embodies, but also to the inevitable assimilation that goes with it. By buying the home he participates in the gender and other domestic norms that are the cause of the destruction of his own home. American "home" values do not provide the security they promise, but devalue cultural norms and elevate what are seen as questionable standards for men and women. As in *The Street*, where African Americans found it difficult to reproduce the gender roles of the nuclear family, *Pocho* questions the ability for a Mexican American family to adopt and adapt to American gender dynamics. Thus, the Rubios can attach themselves to the American home, but the domestic values do not transform/transfer smoothly.

Villarreal engages with the era's discourse on momism as he explores the process of assimilation of the Rubio family. Consuelo learns from non-Mexican friends that the gender dynamics she is used to in her culture are not those of American women. She tells Richard, for example, that "'Here in this country, the woman is looked after by the law. If your father ever put a hand on me—why they would lock him up, that is all" (93).[222] This minute level of power becomes a tool by which Consuelo tries to manipulate Juan. Another manipulation that Consuelo uses is to cease doing housework. Villarreal writes, "The house was unkempt and the father complained, but Consuelo, who had always been proud of her talents for housekeeping, now took the dirty house as a symbol of her emancipation, and it was to remain that way until her death" (134-35). Thus, instead of fulfilling the housewife norms of white America, Consuelo takes on the "empowered" "mom" that Wylie fears is ruining the nation. Wylie describes "moms'" ability to control their men through having them answer to her every caprice:

> These caprices are of a menopausal nature at best—hot flashes, rage, infantilism, weeping, sentimentality, peculiar appetite, and all the ragged reticule of tricks, wooing, wiles, suborned fornications, slobby onanisms, indulgences, crotchets, superstitions, phlegms, debilities, vapors, butterflies-in-

[222] The conversation continues as Richard asks, "'Tell me, Mamá, do you want to have a husband that you can boss? Is that it?' 'We have certain rights in this country,' she said. 'It is not the primitive way here that it is in México. Someone told me that he was with another woman. And I do not have to stand for that any more'" (93).

the-belly, plaints, conniving, cries, malingerings, deceptions, visions, hallucinations, needlings, and wheedlings. (199)

Wylie offers not the least bit of sympathy for women and sees any attempt on their part to get what they want as manipulation. Thus, when Consuelo tries to get more liberation in the home and demand a faithful husband, her methods are characterized as devaluing her womanhood and her value to society, as expressed by a clean and well-kept home.

Wylie suggests that when women stop busying themselves with housework, they become loose cannons: "Mom is something new in the world of men. Hitherto, mom has been so busy raising a large family, keeping house, doing the chores, and fabricating everything in every home except the floor and the walls that she was rarely a problem to her family or to her equally busy friends, and never one to herself" (199). Like Wylie, the narrator and Richard view Consuelo's power grab as negative, and Consuelo, once she has become "Americanized" is viewed as uncleanly, misdirected, and ruinous to the home and family. Villarreal writes, "Although he loved his mother, Richard realized that a family could not survive when the woman desired to command, and he knew that his mother was like a starving child who had become gluttonous when confronted with food. She had lived so long in the tradition of her country that she could not help herself now, and abused the privilege of equality afforded the women of her new country" (134). Thus, while *Pocho* is a novel that views assimilation as inevitable – Richard tells Juan, in regards to speaking English: "'But this is America, Father,' said Richard. 'If we

live in this country, we must live like Americans'" (133) – it nonetheless laments the loss of traditional gender roles and critiques the American "mom," in Wylie's construction, as a detriment to the family.[223] In other words, while the Rubios are establishing an American home, it is the American phenomenon of "momism" that disrupts this process.

Both cultural traditions, Mexican and American, are challenged by the supposedly misguided empowerment of American women.[224] In the process of assimilation, Richard and the narrator exhibit the era's fears of un-contained women. Another fear that emerges in *Pocho*, one that reflects Wylie's predictions of cultural breakdown, is Consuelo's over-affection for Richard. Wylie accuses "mom" of turning everything toward herself, including her (especially male) children, and thus inhibiting their development and stunting their sexual and social maturity. Wylie writes,

> "Her boy," having been "protected" by her love, and carefully, even shudderingly, shielded from his logical development through his barbaric period, or childhood (so that he has either to become a barbarian as a man or else to spend most of his energy denying the barbarism that howls in his brain—an

[223] Indeed, the transformation to female power in the Rubio house is characterized as irrational and, in Wylie's words "harpy"-like (197); Villarreal writes, "'Wake up!' screamed Luz [Richard's sister], and her face was ugly. 'This *your* house!' She laughed shrilly. 'This is our house, and if we want, we can have you put out! Tell him, Mamá. He put the house in your name, in case something happened to him you have no trouble! *Tell him, Mamá!*' she screamed. 'Tell him something has happened to him!'" (166).

[224] Regarding women's right to vote, Wylie writes: "Mom's first gracious presence at the ballot-box was roughly concomitant with the start toward a new all-time low in political scurviness, hoodlumism, gangsterism, labor strife, monopolistic thuggery, moral degeneration, civic corruption, smuggling, bribery, theft, murder, homosexuality, drunkenness, financial depression, chaos and war. Note that" (201).

> autonomous remnant of the youth he was forbidden), is cushioned against any major step in his progress toward maturity. Mom steals from the generation of women behind her (which she has, as a still further defense, also sterilized of integrity and courage) that part of her boy's personality which should have become the love of a female contemporary. Mom transmutes it into sentimentality for herself. (208)

This fear of women's over-affection for their sons led to a fear that men would be emasculated and weak due to an over-reliance on their mothers. In this era, it was held that manly-men could stand up to Communism, but that weaklings and homosexuals were easy targets for Communist infiltration – part of what was known as the Lavender Scare.[225] Indeed, as May suggests, "Momism" "would result from sexually frustrated mothers, who would turn their sons into passive weaklings, 'sissies,' potential homosexuals, 'perverts,' or easy prey for Communists. Nearly all postwar experts agreed with the advice writer who claimed that 'wholesome sex relations are the cornerstone of marriage'" (111). In *Pocho*, Consuelo is at her "best behaved" when she and Juan exhibit a healthy sexual relationship (101-02).[226]

---

[225] See my note above. An excellent example of how momism and weak male children invite Communist infiltration can be found in the 1962 *Manchurian Candidate*, where Angela Lansbury's overbearing mothering and sexual fascination with her son results in an effeminate male child who is brainwashed by Chinese Communists during the Korean War.

[226] Another place where Wylie's ideas seem to crop up in *Pocho* is in the idea of women as gossips. Wylie writes, "As an interesting sidelight, clubs afford mom an infinite opportunity for nosing into other people's business. Nosing is not a mere psychological ornament of her; it is a basic necessity. Only by nosing can she uncover all incipient revolutions against her dominion and so warn and assemble her co-cannibals" (203). In *Pocho*, it is Consuelo's gossiping that ruins the family unity: "His mother now took to gossiping and to believing her neighbors, and Juan Rubio, who long ago had

As a mother, Consuelo is viewed as having a potentially unhealthy affection for her only son. Villarreal reiterates this throughout *Pocho*, and suggests that this affection directly affects Richard's potential manhood. When Richard was twelve the narrator reveals that "In short, he was a sissy" and that "his mother was a lot to blame because she spoiled him" (95, 96).[227] This spoiling is tied directly to Richard's sense of sexuality: "And the only thing he did not like his mother for was that she had placed all her love on him—had taken it away from his father to give to him, as if all the love she had left in her to give would not be enough for her golden boy, who might not be a boy, after all" (96; seeing a hermaphrodite had made Richard question his own sex). These fears, however, are counteracted by his (presumably heterosexual) erection: "yet this morning when he woke up, he was twelve and a man, for he had a hardon, and it was a real good one" (96). Here, Villarreal clearly links a mother's over-affection to a man-child's "sissy" behavior, which directly leads to his questioning of his own sexuality. Consuelo is thus a "mom" who is potentially ruining her son for the adult world. Toward the end of the novel, Juan leaves the home and Richard is made the head of the household in place of his philandering father. Consuelo sees this transferral as a triumph for herself and sees

---

decided that he wanted nothing more out of life than to watch his children grow, saw this last vestige of happiness slipping from his grasp, and once more began to have women" (134).

[227] Richard felt this way, here, because of his fear of Zelda, the local female bully. Villarreal indicates the "unnaturalness" of this by writing that "Juan Rubio took his belt off and beat his son on the legs and buttocks with it. 'Go out there!' he said angrily. 'I'll show you what will happen to you any time you run from a girl'" (68). Later, Richard redeems himself in this regard by sexually exploiting Zelda for his own pleasure. After his sexual conquest, Richard wrests all power from Zelda: "From that day, Zelda spent very little time with the boys. It was understood now that she did not belong in the way she had, and it was only on occasions when she especially missed the old joyfulness of their camaraderie that she joined them somewhere, usually at the Rubio barn, and paid with her body for their company" (119).

Richard as a stand-in for Juan. The narrator says, “Her love for him was so strong that even his renunciation of the eternal life was not too great for her to suffer. It was not too healthy, this thing, she knew. Yet it was bearable, because she realized that she had but a small part of him” (173). Consuelo’s love for Richard is pictured as unhealthy for her, emasculating for Richard, and as alienating for Juan. Thus, again, Villarreal tries to demonstrate how the tenants of momism, as a potential part of the American home, are disruptive to the “proper” gender roles of Mexican and American society.

Indeed, there are many fears in *Pocho* about Richard “going queer” (112) – he is questioned by his father, by his friends, and even by police for his association with the pedophiliac Joe Pete Manõel, an atheist philosopher and Santa Clara loner. Yet Richard “proves his manhood” again and again through his sexual (and emotional) conquests of women (Zelda, a married woman, Mayrie, and a pachuco girl). This proof of heterosexuality is vital for both American and Mexican gender roles as they are presented in the book. When Juan is afraid that Richard may be gay, Villarreal writes, “‘It is nothing, Papá. And you must not worry about me,’ he said in his ear. ‘I have the feeling for girls already.’ Juan Rubio held his son tightly and said, ‘That is the way it should be, son. That is the only way.’ And his voice was full of pride” (90). Women, on the other hand, must exhibit their femaleness once they are sexually mature. When Richard dates the former bully Zelda, for example, his affections cause her to adopt an Americanized female domestic role. After they start dating, “She, for the most part, stayed home, learning the many things of housewifery she had neglected all her life”

(144).[228] Richard, as the only male child in the family, is also given authority over the women in the house. When Juan begins to philander, Richard takes on more responsibility and authority in the household. He exercises his power by yelling at his sisters: "The girls came into the house one by one. There was a frightened look in their faces, and they immediately began to clean the house. They knew what he wanted, for this was not the first time this had happened" (146).[229] Richard's male dominance is thus evident in his sisters' automatic reaction to begin cleaning. In *Pocho*, the male child can adapt to the new culture, but the book blames women for the loss of culture and morals in the home. American women's supposedly misplaced empowerment breaks down the mother and causes her to work less. The novel views Juan's hard work that he put to establishing a home as trashed by this breakdown of cultural gender roles. Juan then leaves the home, further breaking up the family unit that is supposed to be the result of hard work, homeownership, and assimilation.[230] Like *The Street*, Juan and Richard's ambitions are to create a home, yet where Lutie's ambitions tie her to the home, Richard and Juan feel they are free to leave it at will.

Another way that Richard represents an adoption of American cultural values is in the expression of his individuality and in his celebration of cultural pluralism, two

---

[228] She also, fittingly, loses all of her self-assertion and power: "She responded to his newfound and now everpresent [sic] dominance, and made token resistance to his whims only because it pleased him that she occasionally showed spirit. Yet she knew that she would have obeyed his every wish without a whimper" (143).

[229] This authority is bestowed on Richard by Consuelo. She says, "You are the head of the family now, Richard. You are the man of the house" (171).

[230] Richard says to Consuelo: "Surely you must have known he would not live alone! His house fell down, and he must build himself another one, else die" (185), thus justifying the breaking up of a marriage due to the control the woman has taken in the home.

concepts highly valued in American letters at this time. Wylie explains how Hitlerism is the result of mass thinking (136) and writes, "All people exist for each single one. Every man is the center of all others, in so far as he is concerned. When he is able to transcend that notion, and to give out rather than to take in, he has become an individual and knows it. Until he does, he is cattle" (110). In a similar profession of individuality, Villarreal writes of Richard, "He was himself, and everything else was there because he was *himself*, and it wouldn't be there if he were not himself, and then, of course, it wouldn't matter to him. He had the feeling that *being* was important, and he *was*—so he knew that he would never succumb to foolish social pressures again" (108). This individuality allows Richard to pick and choose what cultural values to uphold and defend and which ones to reject or ignore. Richard's behaviors and the friendships he develops reflect both his individuality and the work's emphasis on cultural pluralism. Richard reads every book in his school library, which suggests he encounters multiple perspectives; he befriends Joe Pete Manõel; he has both Mexican friends (migrants) and white, Japanese, and Italian friends (in racially diverse Santa Clara); he idealizes his father but questions the church, his mother and his teachers; he courts and befriends pauchos or zootsuiters; he meets college-type liberals in a writing group, who are promiscuous and some of whom are homosexual; and finally he takes on responsibility for raising his family and eventually joins the armed forces to fight World War II. Villarreal highlights Richard's multiple influences in order to exemplify the instability of Richard's cultural affiliations. This variety of influences on Richard allows Villarreal to

critique both American and Mexican cultures, not just Mexican or Mexican American cultures, as many critics assume.

As Shirley argues (above), Richard is written as an individual – his character is meant to represent the individual in the midst of different groups vying for his affiliation. Despite his self-assured profession of individuality, Richard does vacillate in his affiliations. For example, when Richard meets other Mexican-American youths, he considers their position and learns to value their perspective. The "pachuco," as Richard describes them "had a burning contempt for people of different ancestry, who they called Americans, and a marked hauteur toward México and toward their parents for their old-country ways" (149). While Richard does not ascribe to the pachuco resentment toward both cultures, he does sympathize with and understand their perspective.[231] Villarreal writes, "Before he knew it, he found that he almost never spoke to them in English, and no longer defended the 'whites,' but, rather, spoke disparagingly of them whenever possible" (151). Richard never fully rejects American or Mexican culture, but his vacillation opens up a place for Villarreal's critique. Luedtke writes that "In the Mexican-American community, the *pelado* of the first generation looks forward to the *Chicano* of the third. Between stands the American son of Mexican parents, the hyphenated Mexican-American called *pocho*" (7). Richard's "in between" status leaves him open to the push and pull of influences of both cultures. Like Lutie in

[231] Villarreal writes, "Richard understood them and partly sympathized, but their way of life was not entirely justified in his mind, for he felt they were somehow reneging on life; this was the easiest thing for them to do. They, like his father, were defeated—only more so, because they really never started to live. They, too, were but making a show of resistance" (151).

The Street, Richard vacillates between assimilative tendencies and resistant postures. Thus, when Richard and his multi-racial friends get picked up by police one night for no reason, Villarreal is able to use Richard's situation to question the basic inequalities of democracy. Richard tells the police officer that he does not want to vote. The officer says, "'You have to want to vote—it's one right you're guaranteed,'" and Villarreal writes, "'If that's so,' said Richard, 'then it's my right to not vote if I don't want to vote, isn't it?'" (160-61). Here, in a moment where Richard is arrested because of his race, Villarreal uses Richard's adolescent uncertainly of his own place within American culture to critique the democratic principle of voting. In many ways, Richard's rejection of this precept of democracy mirrors Lutie's non-participation in the war effort. Both cased indicate a displeasure with the falseness of the democracy that they represent.

Again, Richard views assimilation as the inevitable outcome of living in America. *Pocho* sees how the establishment of an American home – based on the use of English language in the house, on the desire for normative white gender roles, as well as on the sense of individuality of the main character – creates rifts and hardships for the Mexican parents and the American children. Villarreal writes, "The heretofore gradual assimilation of this new culture was becoming more pronounced. Along with a new prosperity, the Rubio family was taking on the mores of the middle class, and he [Richard] did not like it" (132). As Richard develops into an adult, we see him participate in normative behaviors that could work to establish him as the head of his own household. For example, Richard enters the adult working world in order to support his

family. He is able to get war work at a decent wage. But, instead of viewing this employment as advancement (no longer needing to do farm labor),[232] he sees it as a duty and a burden. Villarreal writes:

> After a few weeks in the role of breadwinner, Richard sensed that a sense of duty was taking a strong hold on him. Since his father was no longer at home, full responsibility for the discipline of the family, as well as for its maintenance, had slowly been pushed upon him by his mother, and in spite of his resentment at her for taking such unfair advantage of him, and an occasional twinge of pain he felt when he realized that he was taking the place that rightfully belonged to his father, he knew that actually it was the only thing to be done in order that the family should survive. (174)

Richard's breadwinner role is out of sync with the mainstream domestic norms. He is the son taking on the duty of the father, and therefore he continues the "unhealthy" mixing of familial roles found in Wylie. Richard also does not work to fulfill any patriotic duty or to participate in a unifying gesture as the war begins. Instead, Richard sees himself as an undifferentiated member of the mass: "He had slowly dropped into oblivion even in his mind, the one place where once he had soared above the multitude" (180). Thus, as Richard begins to participate in the adult American world, he

[232] *Pocho* does not suggest that there are a lot of options for Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Santa Clara at this time. When talking with Ricky, Richard's Italian American friend, about their future Richard says, "'Naw,' said Richard. 'I'm not gonna do nothing [when I grow up].' And as an afterthought he added, 'Right now, I got the feeling I'm going to be poor all my life'" (111-12).

finds himself shrunken and undifferentiated, thus questioning the ability for him to live up to his individualist ideals.

Richard also participates in adolescent courtship rituals, but never marries. Richard tries out several girls in the story. Mayrie, a white Protestant who he befriended when she first moved to Santa Clara, tells him one day that she is going to marry him. He tells her, "You read too many romances, Mayrie" (137), indicating Richard's own distance from the ritual of early marriage in the 1950s. By not finding Mayrie's offer romantic, Richard also distances himself from the trope of marrying a white woman or man in order to further assimilate (something we see, for example, in *George Washington Gómez*). Mayrie and Richard exchange their first and only kiss, and then Richard feels, "What had occurred was really a beautiful thing. Then, he walked rapidly, not looking back any more, though he wanted to do so, until he reached a group of boys playing stickinthemud on the corner. 'Hi,' he said. 'Zelda around'?" (138). Here, Richard leaves the possibility of marriage to Mayrie behind, never to look back at it. He seals this sentiment with his search for Zelda, who gives sex away freely. Thus, in this instance, Richard chooses pre-marital sex with a "loose" woman instead of the traditional (white) family structure offered by Mayrie. At the same time, the idea of marriage comes up with Zelda as well. Following the above scene, Richard has sex with Zelda and "makes her his girl" and tells her that she's "going to hafta stop laying pipe with all the guys," to which she replies, "'Yes, Richard.' She was full of happiness in her new role, and for the first time in her young life she was glad to be a woman" (141). The obedience that Zelda

soon offers to Richard counteracts the fears of the aggressive and independent woman and shows how Zelda is tamed by a man (and sex).

Even in this traditional male role, however, Richard is uncomfortable. He thinks, "When the day came that he married Zelda, he would be forced to find himself, for Richard was certain that he could never revolve his whole life around marriage. He could not give that institution the importance it had falsely taken on through the centuries. Marriage, per se, was not life, nor could it govern life" (144-45). This questioning of marriage amid the upholding of normative gender roles once again exhibits Richard's inability to fully accept American cultural norms. By not being interested in marriage at this time (the mid-1950s, when the book was written) Richard goes against the social trends toward marriage and family in this baby boom era. Finally, Richard, untrue to Zelda (who is true to him), also finds a pachuco girl. But, "they danced only to soft music while they kissed in the dimmed light, and that was the extent of their lovemaking" (152). In this innocent affair, Richard "felt strange because she was a Mexican and everyone around them was Mexican, and felt stranger still from the knowledge that he felt strange. When the dance was over, he took her to where her parents were sitting and said goodnight to the entire family" (152). Here, as opposed to his relationships with Mayrie and Zelda, Richard experiences Mexican courtship practices. He rejects this tradition, too, however, as this is the extent of the book's mention of this never-named woman. These instances reflect Richard's rejection of

American social trends as much as they reflect the rejection of or distance from Mexican traditions.

Richard also joins the army at the end of the novel and is resolved to fight in World War II. The build up to WWII and the war years were ones marked by patriotic propaganda that stressed unity and sacrifice. Richard and his friends feel some of this excitement as well. Villarreal tells us that at one point, Richard had "a strong, almost overpowering desire to win the war singlehandedly. He did not believe in killing, and what in spite of that conviction would have been romantic of itself at one time was not romantic now. But he sought glory because he was now a part of the infinite nonentity—the worker, the family man" (179). Even as Richard is inspired to join the war effort, he does it not for patriotism or glory, but to have a unique experience.[233] Richard vacillates even in his desire to fight, for he later tells his friend Ricky, "I probably won't be joining anything. I won't get in unless I get drafted, and there's not much chance of that, because I'm too young, and then I got so many dependents" (181). By not joining the war with open arms, as with Lutie, Richard removes himself from the promise of the equality or parity with whites that the war offered to many ethnic Americans, such as the Japanese Americans in *Go for Broke!* Additionally, Villarreal distances his character from the state of "unceasing 'war mindedness'" that the *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* demands during the war. Indeed, instead of viewing the war as a moment of of interracial and interethnic

[233] Conformity was a major fear in the postwar era. See my discussion in my chapter 4.

unity, Richard's vacillation on how he feels about the war itself stems directly from the racist hypocrisies he sees in Santa Clara during wartime.

When the war overseas gets underway, there is an influx of soldiers to Santa Clara. Richard recalls that "Soldiers were common, were drunkards, thieves, and rapers of girls, or something, to the people of Santa Clara, and the only uniforms with prestige in the town had been those of the CCC boys or of the American Legion during the Fourth of July celebration and the Easter-egg hunt. But now everybody loved a soldier, and he wondered how this had come about" (148-49). Here, Richard refuses the simple patriotism that the war engenders and reminds readers that Santa Clara had leaned toward socialism during the depression.[234] The narrator ties these soldiers to racial violence and the Zoot Suit Riots (1943), as the next line of thought concerns the pachucos that Richard later befriends. The narrator writes, "To society, these zootsuiters were a menace, and the name alone classified them as undesirables, but Richard learned […] they were simply a portion of a confused humanity, employing their self-segregation as a means of expression" (150). The narrator continues to sympathize with this group: "And from the boys he learned that their bitterness and hostile attitude toward 'whites' was not merely a lark. They had learned hate through actual experience, with everything the word implied" (150). Thus, while the novel does not directly discuss

[234] In the depression years that the novel covers, Villarreal discusses a multiracial, polyglot socialist coalition that arises in the town. Yet, Villarreal also somewhat flippantly dismisses this coalition when he writes, "And one day Franklin D. Roosevelt was President of the United States, and another phase of Richard's life was over. The Unemployed Council was a thing of the past, and the big red barn was once more thrust into oblivion" (60).

the Zoot Suit Riots, where hundreds of Mexican-Americans were injured and jailed due to racial animosity on the part of marines and other military and civilian personnel, the connection between the presence of soldiers and the reality of racial violence is clear.

It is at this time when Richard and his multiracial friends are picked up on trumped-up charges and questioned by the police. As Richard tells us, "they simply beat them to pieces" (157). This beating comes directly from the tension between soldiers and zootsuiters, as the cops have confused Richard and his friends for members of this group. This is the first instance where Richard feels discrimination, and it leads to him questioning the democratic right to vote (see above). Richard is left feeling that "he would never forget what had happened tonight, and the impression would make him distrust and, in fact, almost hate policemen all his life" (163). Here, Richard's recognition of the racist behavior of those representing the power structure leads directly to his questioning democracy and the war effort. While many newspapers and public figures suggested that the 1943 race riots "were deliberately organized and provoked by agents of Hitlerism […] by creating disunity in our ranks and demoralization of morale and production in our war effort" (International 25),[235] *Pocho* ties the racial violence to white soldiers and police officers, thus refusing them the "out" of foreign influence and further derailing a patriotic response to the war.[236] Richard tells us that this type of

[235] Race riots occurred across the U.S. in 1943. Adam Clayton Powel editorializes that "The list of cities in which the riots occurred during the past two weeks [late June, 1943] is almost unbelievable—LOS ANGELES, DETROIT, MOBILE, NEWARK, CAMP STEWART, CHESTER, BEAUMONT" ("Calling" 16). By August of 1943, this list would include Harlem.

[236] Some responses to the riots did try to use them to induce patriotism. A *People's Voice* article, directed "to our boys in uniform," tells readers that while things are "not well at home," "All of

brutality was new to Santa Clara, which further ties it to the presence of soldiers. The connection between the war and the behavior of soldiers diminishes Richard's interest in fighting; and, like Lutie, he deliberately refuses to express patriotic allegiance in a time when unity is trumpeted an in-road to assimilation and acceptance.

The other way that *Pocho* connects the war to racism is through mention of the internment of the Japanese. Right after Richard tells Ricky that he will not join the army, their friend Thomas Nakano, a Japanese American, shows up:

> "I just come to say goodbye, you guys," he said. The boys looked at him shamefacedly. Since the war had begun, they had avoided him tactlessly. He knew their discomfiture, and it embarrassed him. "I got nothing to do with the war, fellas," he said. "I'm an American, just like you guys. I just come to say goodbye," cause we gotta go away to a relocation center in a few days, an' I don't know if I'll get to see you guys before I leave." (181-82)

The war becomes tied to Richard's loss of a friend and to the unfair treatment of minorities that surrounds it – Thomas talks of his father losing his land and home, and, finally, that he has been jumped by guys he knew from school and from scout troop (183-84). The fact that Thomas knew the men shakes the book's stance on cultural pluralism. While Richard has a diverse set of friends and a pragmatic attitude, this

---

America isn't rioting! Only the scum and swill of the nation stoops to this violent sabotage of all that Democracy stands for" ("My God" 28).

instance is one where the work questions the potential for equality among the races.[237] This leads Richard to violence (if only indirectly). He commissions The Rooster, a pachuco friend, to get vengeance on Thomas's attackers. In the end, when Richard finally signs up for the war, Villarreal writes, "It was bad, thought Richard. It was all wrong. What he had done was as wrong as what they had done to Thomas. It had been like a small battle in the big war, and that war was also wrong. Even to take a small part in it was wrong, but now he must also go to war. It was his only alternative—to get away from this place was the only good he could get from it" (184-85). Richard focuses on violence and racial animosity in the lead up to war not, as would be expected from someone wholly embracing the notion of assimilation, patriotism and unity.

"Assimilation" may indeed by inevitable in *Pocho* – the oft quoted last line of the book reads: "and suddenly he knew that for him there would never be a coming back" (187) – but the unquestioning belief in the opportunities of America, or in the ability to establish a safe and happy home, or in the potential for unity and equality in the aftermath of the war is not inevitable. The novel points out that the young Richard has read Horatio Alger stories, but he never dreams of the American success story (as is it told through the attainment of education, marriage, and a home). In fact, when faced with the Horatio Alger myth, he thinks of the limitations on Mexican American labor in the U.S. When a fight promoter wants Richard to work for him, he tells Richard, "'I'm

[237] Mayrie's brother, Ronnie, incidentally, also makes a racist remark (directly after Mayrie asks Richard to marry her): "'My mother's right about his lousy town. No decent people at all—just a bunch of Mexicans and Japs and I don't know what kind of crud!'" (139).

giving ya the chance of your life—it's the only way people of your nationality can get ahead.' 'I'm an American,' said Richard. 'All right, you know what I mean. Mexicans don't get too much chance to amount to much. You wanna pick prunes the rest of your life?'" (106-07). Richard refuses the work, but then reflects on "the little old lady who was so nice and let him read the Horatio Alger books was thinking of him when she told him he should work hard to be gardener and someday he could work on a rich person's estate […] Funny about her, how the Horatio Alger books meant as much to her as the Bible meant to the Protestants" (107-08). While this woman may believe deeply in the power of bootstrapism, Richard does not. He also sees the limits to advancement that the "little old lady" places on his race. He next reflects on how his school counselor wanted him to take shop and automechanics instead of college prep courses, "so that he could have a trade and be in a position to be a good citizen, because he was a Mexican" (108). Richard sees the place of racial labor, the falsity of marriage, and the failures of the American home. He sees these failings of the liberal promise of America *before* the war. He therefore is unlikely to return, as do the soldier in *Go for Broke!* with the expectation that through service to country, he will gain access to the mainstream. He has already had access to it, and has rejected much of it. Thus, while he cannot hold onto the cultural roots of Mexico to the extent that his father, and many critics, would like, he does not wholly accept the American dream myth or the attendant optimism about his ability, as a Mexican American, to achieve this goal.

Homecoming: Conclusions

Both *Pocho* and *The Street* have been labeled assimilationist texts or texts that fail to envision the civil rights and nationalist movements to come. Yet, both of these texts purposefully explore the tenants of racial liberalism that are laid out for them by popular culture, politicians, and the media. These strong and driven protagonists are thwarted when they attempt to achieve, through hard work and struggle, the symbols of the American domestic mainstream – a happy secure home with its attendant gender roles and prosperity. These texts should be reread as situated in the postwar moment, where liberalism was promising equal opportunities and eventual assimilation for racial minorities along the same lines that worked for white ethnic minorities. Yet, when Petry and Villarreal test theses routes to full citizenship and mainstream acceptance, they show how race, as an organizing factor in American society, prevents their acquisition of the symbolic "home." In *The Street*, Lutie's inability to achieve the material effects of the American home that symbolize safety and a reward for hard work is directly related to her race. In *Pocho*, Richard's inability to adapt to or fully adopt the social roles and ideologies that he finds in American society is equally tied to his race. Richard doesn't marry and does not find reward for his labor – his individuality is stripped, as is his sense of cultural pluralism in America. Both books refuse to participate in the patriotic fervor of the war years, and this avoidance magnifies their critique of the era: what was fought for during World War II—Democracy and the Four Freedoms—remained unrealized on the homefront for Lutie and Richard.

The soldiers in *Go for Broke!*, on the other hand, return home optimistic and with military honors – expecting to be (and pictured as) welcomed by the American masses. Yet, their ability to attain the American dream in reward for their sacrifice on the battlefield also remains in question. The film does not, for example, position them to repossess the homes that they lost (and bitterly complained about at the beginning of the film). At the same time, the film symbolically denies them the ability to establish an American domestic ideal because they are de-sexed and emasculated throughout. Alison Dundes Renteln writes:

> I contend that the internment decision, which removed all males of Japanese ancestry from American society, was partly motivated by concern over the alleged deleterious effects of interracial mixing … Therefore, what was crucial to ensure virtually universal acceptance of the internment policy were specific stereotypes of Japanese American males as being, among other things, hypersexual. (632)

The image of the hypersexual Japanese American male runs counter to the depiction of the Nisei soldiers in *Go for Broke!* We have seen, for example, that Tommy's love for a piglet and his short statue neuters him as a sexual threat to women. At the same time, Sam, the good looking engaged male, gets a "dear John" letter while serving – thus severing him from the possibility of immediately establishing a home upon his return.

A scene involving Lt. Grayson's sexual interest in an Italian woman seals the Japanese American men as nonthreatening and sexually passive. The battalion is

marching through an Italian village, and the men are told to take a break. They all sit down lining the road. A pretty Italian woman opens up her window, looks right at Lt. Grayson (and never at the Nisei men) and says, "it's open lieutenant." The Lieutenant proceeds into the room and begins to "make love" to the woman. The Nisei, having only the companionship of men for many months, express no sexual interest in the woman. They are not even considered candidates for the woman's affections, as if she does not even seem to see them. They merely shake their heads and laugh when she picks the only white man in the vicinity. These men, lacking the virility even to talk about sex, are pictured as children unfamiliar with sexuality, while the manly Grayson marches right into the Italian woman's home. There are no other instances in the film where any of the Nisei express interest in sex, women, or marriage (other than Sam and his letters to his fiancé). When Frank talks about how excited he is to go on leave, it is not to wine and dine with beautiful Italian women, but to see the sights of Rome. When the Nisei are pictured drinking in a bar, it is all men. In fact, Kaz is up on stage doing a feminized version of a hula dance with his pants rolled up.[238] Thus, by de-sexing the Japanese American males in *Go for Broke!* there are no residual fears of their hypersexuality.

The de-sexed nature of the Nisei soldiers reveals a slippage in the liberal narrative of tolerance that the movie projects. By voiding any desire they might have for a mate (or for mating), the film further reduces their ability to (re)assimilate into a domestic life on the homefront. The film was made in 1951 – a full six years after the

[238] While hula is traditionally a masculine dance, it was associated with women dancers at this time. The pants rolled up may indicate his femininity by showing off his legs.

end of World War II. The homes and businesses taken by the War Relocation Authority are still largely in shambles or completely lost. In *Japanese Relocation* (1942), a film made by the Office of War Information and the Bureau of Motion Pictures, U.S. officials tried to explain their stripping away of the homes of Japanese Americans. The film notes that aids were employed to help the Japanese with their businesses and property, but admits that financial losses were usually involved with quick sales due to evacuation. The film also states that "The evacuees cooperated wholeheartedly. The many loyal among them felt that this was a sacrifice they could make on behalf of America's war effort," which mirrors the sentiments in *Go for Broke! Japanese Relocation* also employs the "pioneer" myth, which many critics have pointed out was an aspect of WRA propaganda in the internment camps. Shipping their prisoners off to desolate locations in the American West, the Nisei were seen as "pioneering" (read: breaking new land for farming) these "territories." Because they are prisoners, however, the freedom associated with the pioneer myth rings false here. *Japanese Relocation* plays "Oh, Suzanna," a song associated with the West and westward expansion, as the buses full of evacuees depart. As John Howard tells us in *Concentration Camps on the Home Front*, "The pioneer myth was deployed repeatedly in camp discourse, well beyond the classrooms—and not only by camp administrators but also by Japanese American advocates of assimilation" (156).[239] Caroline Chung Simpson, in *An Absent Presence*, tells us that many Nisei who resettled after the internment saw "themselves as pioneers

[239] He also writes, "In 1945, however, many Nisei—described as 'pathetically eager' to be American—called upon the shopworn maxims of American mobility. A new frontier! Westward, ho!" (220).

bravely attempting to transgress privileges denied to them" (161). Thus, while they were denied their right to property and their freedoms, internees were encouraged to imagine this imprisonment as a step closer to attainment of the "homesteader" myth and, thus, to the acquisition of the American domestic ideal.

Yet, in *Go for Broke!* there are no imaginings of home. The characters who were not interned do not reminisce about their home lives. Those who were interned discuss life in the camps. Tommy, from Hawaii, never talks about his return, but merely about his parents' death (further distancing him from a home life). Kaz, also from Hawaii, never talks about it either – but he is associated not with Japanese Americans, but with Hawaiians, so his home is made even more denaturalized or "foreign" since he is associated with Hawaiians, who are not American at this time. Thus, while home seems to be the reward for the soldiers in the 442nd, home is unimaginable in this film – either through nostalgia or through marriage and mating. Like *Home of the Brave*, the film stops short of actually picturing its ideals in action in civilian life. Because the film ends with the award ceremony (and not with their return "home"), home for the Nisei is also unfulfillable. Thus, like *Pinky*, which reaffirms the immutability of race (even as it asks its protagonist to believe that education will lead to advancement), so too does *Go for Broke!* promise the rewards for service to its men, only to deny their ability to attain the (white) American domestic ideal.

The Street and *Pocho*, on the other hand, face this myth full on. Each one is looking at how race becomes intransmutable in American society. Each shows that hard

work and bootstrapism do not result in the "final" reward of the attainment of the domestic ideal – along with the attendant gender roles and class position it assumes. At the same time, both works show how the gender roles of the mainstream are distorted in the racial community due to racist labor practices. The high expectations for the nuclear home, the stable family, and prosperous consumer are proved to be unattainable by the racial subject. In *Go for Broke!* this same gender distortion occurs through the emasculation of the Nisei soldiers. In all cases, the racial labor used to attain the home and the American ideal thwarts the ability for the racial subject to attain that ideal. All three texts confront the myth that war service and patriotism will result in gains on the domestic, legal, and economic front. Richard does not fulfill audience expectation of full assimilation (as George G. Gómez does) because we don't see the outcome. Lutie does not engage with the expectations of wartime, but presages that the suggestion that war service will advance individual is as outmoded as the African American uplift model. And the men of the 442nd are shown to be expectant and excited about a time already passed and about a homecoming that has already resulted in disappointment.[240] The liberal tolerance message in *Go for Broke!* reveals its slippages as it refuses to envision the outcome of its own message. Thus the liberal agenda asking that racial minorities work hard and subscribe to the dominant domestic norm in order to attain social parity with whites, is proven wrong in all cases – even in the film that

[240] See my discussion of John Okada's *No-No Boy* in my chapter 4.

retrospectively tries to (re)integrate Japanese American men back into the American landscape.

Chapter 4: The Regrets of Dissent: Blacklists and the Race Question

"'Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible,' wrote [Reinhold] Niebuhr; 'but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary'" (Schlesinger xii-xiii)

"There never had been enough bread and freedom to go around" (Tolstoy, qtd. in Himes 150)

The Landscapes of Conformity and Dissent in *Salt of the Earth*

In previous chapters, I have explored the failures of the assimilation/acculturation model to prove an appropriate strategy for American racial minorities who want both the benefits of citizenship as well as a reduction of the racist barriers to success in the U.S. The promise that military service, education, and hard work would lead to entry into the mainstream was widely portrayed in film and by liberal politicians in the postwar era. Written in an era characterized by conformity, the novels of Paredes, Sone, Petry and Villarreal create characters who strive for success within the mainstream model only to highlight that the available routes to full citizenship (ones conforming to mainstream expectations) are road blocked by race and discrimination in the American landscape. Yet while these texts foreground racism and the limits to the assimilation model, their characters do not mount full-scale critiques of the system, even as the authors condemn the system and charge it with the ultimate failure of their characters' aspirations. In other words, in Paredes and Sone, for example, the critique leveled by their texts is not, in the main, voiced by their characters, but instead is revealed by the fact that dual segregation is the price of assimilation through education. In Petry and Villarreal, the critique is found, again, not in direct actions by the

characters, but in the fact that their hard work and ambition do not, because of racial discrimination in America, remit the rewards they so promise.

In the Hollywood-made race problem films I have explored, and in many more films of the era that attempted to change for the better the way that Americans viewed racial subjects, the writers and directors "took on" the race issue and solved the "problem" of cultural integration via the same ethnic assimilation model that the novels suggest is inapplicable to racial minorities. At the same time, while these films promise that hard work, military service, and patience will help white America see both individuals and groups as more deserving of equality, they also pull back that promise by failing to visually or narratively demonstrate the success that is supposed to stem from these practices. In *Home of the Brave*, for example, Moss is not presented with the same dignity, freedom, or assertiveness as the Jewish character he is modeled on. In *Pinky*, Pinky's challenge to the system is for inheritance rights; the film puts her back in the racist South, demands that she become "black" again, and refuses her the avenue of protest. The message is to keep striving; not that striving will get you out of the racist structures of America. Finally, in *Go for Broke!*, while the characters work toward acceptance through patriotism and hard work, the film fails to imagine the Nisei soldiers' homecoming beyond the New York Harbor. Unable to visualize a return to the men's West Coast (or any) dwellings, the film is then unable to visualize a home for the men within the American landscape.

Given the limits encouraged and imposed by the Hays Code (a.k.a. the Motion Picture Production Code), the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), conservative unions such as the International Alliance of Theatrical State Employees and Moving Picture Operators (IATSE) and the Screen Actors Guild, and racist film distributors, theaters and censors in the South,[241] Hollywood writers and directors were unlikely (and often unable) to "Take[] a Stand, and Stand[] Alone," as ads for *Home of the Brave* nonetheless claimed. These circumscriptions to the potential freedoms of writers and directors do not, however, paint the clearest picture of the problems involved with engaging in dissent in the era. The early Cold War years are ones characterized by conformity and consensus culture. The lure to be part of this "mainstream conformity" is evidenced in the expansion of the suburbs, the strict gender roles of the decade, and the baby boom.[242] Also prominent in these years was a fear of Communism – by adhering to mainstream norms, one could avoid being associated with Communists; however, adhering too readily to social and cultural demands was also

---

[241] The Hays Code was enforced from the mid 30s until the late 60s, and censored what images could be shown in films. HUAC, on the other hand, investigated Hollywood for Communists and Communist sympathizers, resulting in blacklists and "naming names." The IATSE and the Screen Actors Guild enforced the blacklists by refusing to work on films that hired blacklisted individuals. Finally, censorship was carried out on a theater-by-theater basis in the South for many years; local theaters would often cut or reduce scenes they viewed as questionable, but they also often refused to show a film at all. For more on the Hays Code and the internal policing of the film industry, see Leonard Leff's *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code*, Thomas Patrick Doherty's *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, or Thomas Cripps's *Making Movies Black*. For more on the IATSE and the Screen Actors Guild see Reynold Humphries's *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* or Herbert Biberman's *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film*. For a discussion of local censorship see Margaret McGehee's "Disturbing the Peace: *Lost Boundaries*, *Pinky*, and Censorship in Atlanta
Georgia, 1949-1952."

[242] For more on this, see May's *Homeward Bound* and my discussion in my chapter 3.

suspect: if you did *anything* just to belong, then your fanaticism might someday be turned toward nefarious ends. In this chapter I look at critique that is more direct and thus more dangerous because of the repressive atmosphere of the early Cold War years. This atmosphere of conformity inspired dissent, but also tempered that dissent to fit within the bounds of the democratic system in place. I will also look at the ways in which the right to dissent was sanctioned and, like the promises in the Hollywood movies held out to racial minorities, was also nonetheless revoked through the arm of social pressure, political coercion, and economic punishment. This chapter argues that voicing political dissent, while sanctioned and encouraged in a democracy, could result in a revoking of the "right" to be part of the "conforming mainstream."

The 1954 independent film *Salt of the Earth*, Chester Himes's 1946 novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, and John Okada's 1957 novel *No-No Boy* all explore the dangers and drawbacks of dissent in America in the postwar moment. They all feature racial minorities who stand up against racial oppression and this is characterized as a daunting task and one with wide-ranging potential repercussions – to fail, these works show us, one does not only seemingly lose the security of home and family (especially as it is characterized by white norms), but also puts the protesters in harm's way bodily, legally, and socially. The characters do not so much triumph over oppression, but over the barriers to dissent – barriers that are not supposed to be there in a self-professed democracy. By showing not only the limits of American pluralism but also the limits to democratic dissent, these works participate in a wartime and postwar characterization

of the United States as the home of the free – they do so, notably, at a time when the African American civil rights movement was experiencing both challenges and triumphs. Where *Salt of the Earth* proffers group rights and communal protest as a way to influence the actions of a company, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and *No-No Boy* offer stances in relation to the institutional hypocrisies of the U.S. military establishment that reverberate and reflect in the social dynamics and the concept of the home in the civilian world. All of the works view these struggles through individuals, which, while staying within the dominant trend of the era that focused on the individual, stand as metonyms for the larger effects of the power of racism in the U.S.

Directed by Herbert Biberman, written by Michael Wilson, and produced by Paul Jarrico's Independent Productions Corporation (IPC) and the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW),[243] *Salt of the Earth* is pro-union, anti-racist, and proto-feminist. The film tells the story of Local 890 of IMMSWU, a Hanover, New Mexico union that carried out a 15 month strike against Empire Zinc that "began on October 17, 1950 and lasted until January 24, 1952" (McCarthy 23). Attacked by everyone from journalists to Congressmen, *Salt of the Earth* was the only blacklisted film ever produced. The film is based on a true story, but uses two individuals as representative of the larger struggle against racism and discrimination that the film depicts. Its winning of the strike and its pro-labor stance tie this film to the radicalism of

[243] Larry Ceplair notes, however, that "Though the IUMMSW had agreed to sponsor the movie, it provided little assistance and no funds. Local 890, however, would provide actors, a production committee (to recruit and gather the extras), set constructors, and night watchmen" (*Marxist* 145).

the 1930s and the early 1940s; yet, its focus on overcoming racial inequality and its use of a single couple to tell that story, place it within the postwar liberal tolerance agenda. Produced during the conservative postwar period, *Salt of the Earth* tries to enact a critique within the bounds of democracy (i.e. not questioning the whole system via Communism or socialism), even though the film is based on a pro-Communist union. At the same time, characters in *Salt of the Earth* fight for the safety and belongingness of the home, which demonstrates a desire for the capitalist material paradise of the home so widely represented in the postwar period. Finally, despite the film's efforts to temper its dissent and despite the characters' desire for belongingness in the American landscape, the repression of the film by the anti-Communist network stands as an example of the difficulty that the racial minority faces when trying to (re)integrate into American domestic bliss after leveling a strong critique of the barriers that keep them from that bliss.

Starring Rosaura Revueltas (as Esperanza Quintero) and Juan Chacón (as Ramon Quintero) the movie's cast consists of both professional and non-professional actors – Revueltas a Mexican actress and Chacón a member and later president of Local 890. The film's narrative covers the story of the strike for better working conditions as well as the formation and the demands of the Women's Auxiliary, who fought for equality with both Anglos (hot water for their homes) and Chicanos (equality on the picket line and in the home). Again, the mix of these demands illustrates how the film straddles the line between the labor radicalism of the 30s and the liberal tolerance of the 50s. Yet, even

straddling the line proved to be enough to indict the film and prevent its widespread release. The miners, who had already been in prolonged talks with management, decide to strike when yet another miner is injured on the job. Their main strike demand is for safer working conditions, which translates in this case to equality with Anglos because the white workers are able to work in pairs while the Mexican American laborers have to work alone. The women also have a set of demands having to do with sanitation and hot water in the company homes, which also relates to parity with Anglos since the company houses Anglos live in have hot, running water. The men initially put the women's demands on the back burner, and begin their strike. After several months and much harassment and many attempts to bring scabs in, the company gets a court injunction (under the Taft-Hartley bill)[244] to stop the miners from picketing. At this time, the women, slowly gaining self-assertion through their assistance with the strike, declare (with the help of a community vote) that they shall picket in the men's place, much to the chagrin of the miners, especially Ramon Quintero. While the women are striking, the men must do the housework and the women must face violence and harassment on the line. The women are characterized as empowered by the strike and prove their mettle in tough circumstances. The juxtaposition of male and female

[244] According to George Lipsitz, the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 reduced the power of unions while increasing the power of corporations. As he puts it, "Taft-Hartley merely adapted existing labor legislation to the new challenges posed by rank-and-file militancy. Consistent with traditional corporate-liberal aims of stability, predictability, and security, the bill address itself primarily to restraining mass strikes, to ensuring management control over production, and to preventing rivalries within unions from leading to excessive demands on management" (157). For more on the Taft-Hartley Act and radical unionism in the immediate postwar period, see Lipsitz's *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s*.

struggles in conjunction with the role reversal spawns a sense of community and cooperation over gender (and also racial) lines and comprises a major victory of the strike – to whit, the men seeing women's demands as valid and their work as valuable. The strike is eventually won and the company (presumably, since it is not shown) gives in to the demands of the miners and their wives.

The film is lauded by critics for its cooperative spirit both in its subject matter and in its production. *Salt of the Earth* is as much about this strike as it is about the back story of the film.[245] Touted as "the only blacklisted American film," *Salt of the Earth* was made by blacklisted Hollywood filmmakers (Biberman a member of the Hollywood Ten) and members of a union that was ousted from the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1950 for pro-Communist leanings (Morris 485).[246] *Salt of the Earth* is also praised for being the product of collaboration between Hollywood/Marxist intellectuals[247] and the rank and file miners. Benjamin Balthaser tells us that "Michael Wilson, Jarrico's brother-in-law and the blacklisted screenwriter of *Salt*, insisted that the

---

[245] Nearly every critical treatment of *Salt of the Earth* retells the story of its production. For further reading on this topic see Biberman's *Salt of the Earth*, Michael Wilson and Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt's *Salt of the Earth*, the 1953 *California Quarterly* entitled *Salt of the Earth*, James J. Lorence's *The Suppression of* Salt of the Earth, and, more contemporarily, Benjamin Balthaser's "Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen *Salt of the Earth*."

[246] For more on Mine-Mill's history in the Southwest, see James Lorence and Benjamin Balthaser. Lorence tells us that "by the late 1940s fallout from the domestic Cold War threatened the precarious foothold gained by Mine-Mill in the southwest mines. By 1949 Mine-Mill had gone on record with convention resolutions urging that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan be terminated, positions parallel to those of the Communist Party. Moreover, the International executive board's decision not to sign noncommunist affidavits in compliance with the Taft-Hartley Act (1947) raised the stakes. Finally, from 1950 through 1953, the union's stubborn opposition to the Korean War was to confirm Mine-Mill's pro-Communist status for many observers of the union scene" (24)

[247] I use the term generously – the makers of the film were men involved in left politics and would not be considered part of the rank and file.

mine workers themselves would have veto power over scenes and content, and he helped form a committee of union members and the ladies' auxiliary who could suggest and implement changes" (348). A rare occurrence in film history, this collaboration is looked at both by members of the film cast and production team as well as by contemporary critics as productive of positive depictions of Chicano/as as well as a cherished aspect of the film's legacy.

A. Gabriel Meléndez's description of the changes is characteristic of many commentators on the film. She writes:

> Wilson had written a subplot about the strike leader Ramon having an affair with a woman whose husband was at war in Korea, and had also portrayed this character as having a drinking problem. The largely Mexican-American miners threw out the stereotypical alcohol problem and they and their wives voted to eliminate the adultery subplot in favor of an increased concentration on the story of women's equality. (7)

Meléndez also suggests that "Community approval was especially important because many mine families operated from a deep conviction that the film project was a testament to their 'burning desire for an end to racial discrimination' in southern New Mexico (Lorence 1999, 44)" (118). Indeed, Jerrico and Biberman, writing in a special issue of *California Quarterly* devoted to *Salt of the Earth*, put forward the notion that "By rough estimate, no less than four hundred people had read, or heard a reading of, the screenplay by the time we commenced production" (60). In the same issue of

California Quarterly, Juan Chacón recalls, "We organized a production Committee composed both of people from the local union, the Ladies' Auxiliary and the motion picture company […] This committee was a policy-making body, with the responsibility of seeing that our picture ran true to life from start to finish" (71). Thus filmmakers, miners, and contemporary critics laud this collaboration for its sensitivity to a community's vision of itself and for its commitment to reduce the use of stereotypes of Mexican Americas. The film is about Mexican Americans, was edited, presumably approved, and acted in by community members from the mining town, and was written, directed, and produced by blacklisted filmmakers. Because of these qualities, and because of the negative reception of the film upon its release, I characterize this film as an example of minority dissent, despite the fact that the filmmakers were white.

The film is intense and beautiful. The amateur and professional actors bring to the movie a sense of realism and passion, and the New Mexico landscape, shot in black and white, is made cold and menacing in view of the mines and what they represent. The score creates a feeling of urgency and action. These characteristics meld well with the technical shortcomings of the film that spring from the difficulties that IPC came across in trying to create a pro-labor, independent film in the mid 1950s. Lillian S. Robinson describes the way narrative aesthetic and political stance blend in the final product of *Salt of the Earth*: "*Salt of the Earth* was made by Hollywood left-wingers who established an independent company as a response to McCarthyism in the movie industry. Some of the film's technical problems and just about all of its political integrity

are the result of the conditions of harassment under which it was made" (174). Patrick McCarthy sums up these harassments as follows: "congressional red-baiting, local vigilantism, a lockout from Hollywood's technical facilities (and) a boycott by most exhibitors" (23). Add to this bad press, hostile unions, money shortcomings, and the deportation of Revueltas before the last scenes were filmed, and it is no wonder that the film barely got made and then failed to be exhibited in anything more than extremely limited runs in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles (Miller 34). These difficulties, according to nearly every critic who has written about this film, reflect the repressive atmosphere of McCarthyism and the Cold War. Peter Morris says it "took courage" to make the film and Lorence suggests, quoting Jerrico, that "the campaign against the film was a predictable by-product of the early Cold War social and political environment, which was sufficiently repressive to deny the *Salt* group both 'economic opportunity' and 'freedom to express [their] ideals through film'" (17).

Critics appraise *Salt of the Earth* as a triumph and often focus on how its unique background and unlikely existence is a testament to and model of resistance. McCarthy, focusing on the early feminism in the film, argues that "sexual politics was not only a controversial subject, but *Salt of the Earth* defied convention and has endured precisely because of its topical statements about sexism in society" (26). Others see the fair portrayal of Mexican Americans as the film's legacy. Meléndez writes "The dignity of their [the people of the town's] participation on film suggest that finally the image of Chicanos—in this case, of Nuevomexicanos—had plied its way through the layers of

distortion to form a more fully rounded view of men and women creating their own history and acting with their own agency and determination" (123-24). Larry Ceplair argues, on the other hand, that "The film's particular claim on posterity is the Marxist vision that Jarrico, Wilson, and Biberman brought to the project. The values that informed their political lives gave an aesthetic coherence to the story of Mexican American miners and their families that had been lacking in all previous movies, and has been missing from all subsequent movies, about working people" (*Marxist* 157). Jean Pfaelzer sees it as a "utopian vision" that "dismantles the 'patriarchal gaze'" and suggests "history that hints at time yet to come." Thus, according to this view, although the actual and fictional strikes were successful, like many of the race problem films of the era *Salt of the Earth* is still future-directed toward more gains that would combat sexism and racism. Along these lines Tom Miller writes "The Southwestern mining town is frozen in time, but the powerful portrayal of human dignity and social realism is timeless" (34).[248] Finally, Dennis Broe suggests that the winning of the strike is the seminal breakthrough of the film. He writes, "Rather than conform to the law, the workers, in an ending that exceeds any of the outside-the-law crime films of the immediate post-war period, by their mass action instead force the law to adjust to their needs; they define the law" (8).

[248] Lorence similarly argues, "It was this consciousness of class, together with an intense pride in culture, that found expression in the *Salt* project; and the film remains a tribute to Mexican-American determination to build a community that not only respected human dignity but also preserved cultural identity" (11).

In considering whether *Salt of the Earth* (re)defined the law within the political context of the Cold War, it is important to examine the nature of the critique that the film makes. Benjamin Balthaser offers scholars of the film a close reading between the original script and the one used for the final version of the movie. Balthaser notes that the changes made to the script not only helped create a more honest picture of the unions' struggle and the people involved, but also dramatically scaled back the leftist critique of U.S. imperialism and Cold War policy. He writes, "it's nothing short of stunning that the entire context of anticommunism is removed from the script" (360). According to Balthaser, the rewritten script removes a side plot where a woman's husband[249] is M.I.A. in Korea; the woman notes that her husband never wanted to fight in the war and never believed in it. Balthaser also suggests that scenes were cut where miners were more directly anti- the anti-Communist agenda of the local press and the mining company. Balthaser writes, "It is not an understatement to suggest that the removal of nearly all references to the Korean War and anticommunism alone produce a film that, while challenging the Cold War consensus, severs crucial links between internal U.S. politics and third world revolution" (351). He also notes that Mine-Mill was a highly radical union and that the global critique, something he suggests was possible in the 1930s, is no longer valid in the postwar moment – at least not for this film (358).[250]

[249] The woman, in fact, that Ramon was supposed to have the affair with, which was one of the cut scenes that critics celebrate as avoiding the "Latin Lover" stereotype.

[250] Balthaser writes, "And like other central organizations of the popular front, Mine-Mill was deeply invested in a politics of international solidarity, condemning the Truman Doctrine, opposing the Marshall Plan, officially endorsing the Wallace "peace" campaign, as what some refer to as the last gasp of the popular front against the Cold War" (366). And continues, "the history of the mine-

In asking why Local 890 would scale back its radial posture, he suggests that "securing an end to decades if not over a century of racial discrimination may have been more of a priority" (352). He also argues that the changes to the film "suggest that Mine-Mill attempted to manage a delicate balance between its vulnerability as a minority union and its commitment to profound social change" and that the political climate of the 1950s "meant that any act of resistance was necessarily circumscribed" (368). Balthaser's reading is a valuable contribution to understanding the ways in which the film hedged its bets on racial tolerance rather than on Communism. This fear of being associated with Communism, violence, or radicalism while leveling a critique about racism is also reflected in the novels of Himes and Okada.[251]

Salt of the Earth only gives voice to the grievances of Local 890 and its community; however a central focus of the film is on the larger practices of racial discrimination and gender inequality, especially as they are practiced by the mining company. Early in the film, when Ramon and some of the union men are discussing the strike, Frank,[252] the union steward, asks Ramon why he thinks the company is not giving in to their demands. Ramon says, "Because most of us here are Mexican-Americans!

---

workers' struggle in the Southwest is one punctuated with vigilante violence, deportation of union activists whether or not they held legal residency or citizenship, and red-baiting by the white community and influential members of the middle-class Mexican American community, as well as other unions, not to mention official state forces" (367). Finally, Balthaser also makes the argument that the cuts to the script indicate that multiethnic democracy is not possible while the United States remains an empire" (359).

[251] For more on how anti-racism and Communism were conjoined in the popular imagination, see Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* and my discussion in my introduction.

[252] Frank Barnes is played by Clinton Jencks, the actual union representative from the International. His wife, Virginia Jencks plays Ruth Barnes in the film.

Because we want equality with Anglo miners—the same pay, the same conditions" (11-12).[253] To which Frank replies, "Exactly. And equality's the one thing the bosses can't afford. The biggest club they have over the Anglo local is, 'Well—at least you get more than the Mexicans'" (12). Here the characters express their demands for equality and expose the company's exploitation of Mexican and Anglo workers.[254] In the following scene, several women get together to discuss their sanitation demands, Esperanza's voiceover tells us that "The Anglo miners have bathrooms and hot running water, Consuelo said, why shouldn't we" (16). Teresa and Consuelo, motivating forces for the women's involvement in the strike, voice the women's complaints. Teresa says, "We got to make them understand—make the men face up to it" (16), at which time they produce a sign reading: WE WANT SANITATION—NOT DISCRIMINATION. Consuelo then says, "We'll make a lot of signs like this. Then we'll get all the wives together and go right up to the mine" (16). Long before the women are needed to take the men's place on the picket line, the film shows their militancy and their understanding of and willingness to voice their grievances about both racial and gendered inequality. Dissent of this nature is leveled throughout the film by the characters. At the same time, when the men must do housework and when the women take on the duties of the miners in the strike, they validate each other's dissent via mutual experience and understanding.

[253] All quotations from the film are taken from Michael Wilson's published screenplay.
[254] Interestingly, in this scene, Ramon also discusses the need for sanitation, better health care, and the threat of repossession of his wife's radio – demands that he dismissed when they were expressed by Esperanza in the scene prior to this one.

Yet, this gender reversal is only temporary and must be viewed with some skepticism given the climate of repressive gender roles for women across racial communities.[255]

The dissent that the characters enact, while direct and forceful, also seems purposefully free of violence, which keeps the miners within the law and therefore mitigates the effect that the radicalism of the strike might have on a Cold War audience.[256] When Ramon catches a scab near the picket line and sees that it is Sebastian, a fellow Mexican American, he calls him a "Judas" and a "bloodsucker" (36). And while the film shows him grabbing Sebastian by the collar and shaking him, it stops short of violent reprisal: Roman says, "You think I was going to work you over? I wouldn't dirty my hands with you," and instead deigns to spit in the man's face. For this action Ramon is arrested and then beaten. Yet, because he himself is not violent, he does not actually cross the law. Thus, in a brilliant cross-cutting between Ramon's beating and Esperanza's childbirth, the film garners sympathy for a non-violent family man and a labor leader. During the beating, one of the sheriff's men, Kimbrough, says, "Hey Vance, you said this bull-fighter was full of pepper. He don't look so peppery now," to which Vance replies, "Oh, but he is. He's full of chili, this boy" (38) – they then punch him in the stomach or, just as easily, the groin. Thus, even as Ramon has mounted a non-violent critique of discrimination, the sheriff's men emasculate him and falsely

---

[255] For more on Mexican American gender roles in this era, see my discussion of Pocho in my chapter 3.

[256] As Patrick McCarthy writes, "In the reactionary atmosphere of the Fifties, a violent protest may have alienated further the film's supporters as well as enemies, and 'The film downplays the extent of the violence directed at the picketers, lest its credibility be questioned. (It was, of course, questioned anyway)'" (28).

accuse him. In other scenes, it is Esperanza that holds back the hand of violence. During a meeting at the Quintero's, Kimbrough and Vance come in with a repossession order for their radio. Ramon is ready to fight them, but Esperanza, "speaking with a new-found fierceness" (according to the script), tells Ramon to "Let them take it! […] Can't you see they want to start a fight so that they can lock you *all* up at one time?" (46). It is her levelheadedness that keeps Ramon and the others from falling into the trap, but this scene, like the one above, also highlights the dignity of the characters and their willingness to stay within the bounds of the law, despite their outspoken and relentless dissent and despite the threat of tear gas, harassment, and violence from the company men and from the police force.

The other moment when Esperanza holds back the potential for violence is when Ramon tries to strike her. The quarrel begins after Esperanza's arrest. Ramon has had to watch the kids for some days and when she comes home, she goes directly to a meeting regarding the strike. He goes out for drinks and plans a hunting trip. When he returns, they have their fight. Ramon has lost some faith and feels that the company can starve them out, while Esperanza feels they are getting "stronger than ever before" (81). Esperanza accuses Ramon of not knowing how to stand by her or to be her friend. She says, "Have you learned nothing from this strike? Why are you afraid to have me at your side? Do you still think you can have dignity only if I have none?" (81). She continues:

> Yes. I talk of dignity. The Anglo bosses look down on you, and you hate them for it. "Stay in your place, you dirty Mexican"—that's what they tell you. But why

> must you say to me, “Stay in your place?” Do you feel better having someone lower than you? […] Whose neck shall I stand on, to make me feel superior? And what will I get out of it? I don’t want anything lower than I am. I’m low enough already. I want to rise. And push everything up with me as I go. (82)

This speech refers back to the earlier complaint about the company using racism to keep both Anglos and Mexicans in “their place,” and, in a powerful move, puts women’s inequality on the same plain. In the argument, Esperanza calls Ramon a fool and tells him he cannot win the strike without her and he lifts his hand to hit her. According to the script, “Esperanza’s body goes rigid. She stares straight at him, defiant and unflinching. Ramon drops his hand” (82). She then says, “That would be the old way. Never try it on me again—never,” and after a pause adds, “I am going to bed now. Sleep where you please—but not with me” (82). In this powerful scene, where Esperanza both voices her dissent against the mining company and gender oppression, the disruption of gender roles nearly causes a violent reaction from Ramon. Given the nonviolent stance of the civil rights movement at this time, the scene aligns gendered and racial oppression and suggests that both become part of the nonviolent struggle for civil rights.

The nonviolence of the above scene also protects the home from such outbreaks. The major struggle of *Salt of the Earth*, ostensibly about the miners’ rights in their strike, is heavily focused on the home. Many scenes take place within the Quintero’s home, and their home is one of the first as well as the last images we see in

the film. Indeed, a large aspect of the feelings of dignity that the miners and the women are asking for has to do with the poor nature of their housing and its unsanitary conditions. Both the men and the women experience these harsh conditions in the film, and both are dedicated to gaining parity with Anglo homes. Indeed, the final tactic that the company employs to break the strike is to evict the Quinteros from their home. As this is happening, however, the community gathers and begins replacing the items removed as fast as the sheriff and his men can remove them. (Re)taking control of the home, in the movie's narrative, is what signals the end of the film and the winning of the more important, personal aspects of the strike. Ramon says, "Thanks … sisters … and brothers. Esperanza … thank you … for your dignity. You were right. Together we can push everything up with us as we go" (90). And Esperanza thinks, "Then I knew we had won something they could never take away—something I could leave to our children—and they, the salt of the earth, would inherit it" (90). Here, the "inheritance" is non-material, but it centers on the home and its values.

It is hard to judge how *Salt of the Earth* was received by audiences, since, as Larry Ceplair points out, "In its first thirty years of existence, it was shown at precisely thirteen theaters in the United States" (*Marxist* 174).[257] According to Balthaser, "the film exposes a larger truth about Cold War politics—that the kind of open struggle

[257] Ceplair adds, "The film's makers, Independent Productions Corporation, filed a suit, in 1955, alleging violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act by Local 110 of the International Alliance of Theatrical State Employees and Moving Picture Operators (IATSE). One year later, IPC filed another conspiracy-to-restrain-trade suit against sixty-eight individuals and organizations. In 1964, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty" ("Many" 8),

imagined and led in the 1930s was no longer possible within the United States" (358). Indeed, the film was heavily attacked long before its release, but not solely for its leftist leanings. Jean Pfaelzer remarks that "After the shoot. Pathe, a major production company, refused to process the film, local theater owners refused to project it, insurance companies canceled workmen's compensation coverage, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service arrested and deported Rosaura Revueltas, the Mexican star." Dennis Broe writes:

> Members of the congress denounced the film before it was even completed. The Secretary of Commerce vowed to halt any exhibition of the film abroad. Both the studios and the studio-aligned craft unions, IATSE, attempted to use their influence to halt post-production. The industry threatened immediate blacklisting for anyone who working on the film and organized an exhibitor's boycott so that the film never reached the national box office. (1)

That the film was silenced before it was even finished testifies to the power of the anti-Communist network. It also reveals that the marriage of race and dissent, even when that dissent was tempered by pro-democracy sentiments, proved explosive in this era. To illustrate how much race played into the justifications for repressing this film, as Tom Miller records:

> on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, California Congressman Donald Jackson declared: "This picture is deliberately designed to inflame racial hatreds and to depict the United States of America as the enemy of all colored

> people." If shown in Latin America, Asia, and India, Jackson continued, "it will do incalculable harm … to the cause of free people everywhere.' Jackson pledged 'to do everything in my power to prevent the showing of this Communist-made film in the theaters of America." (33)[258]

Jackson's description of an "incalculable" threat that is "unseen" (since the movie had yet to be produced) is closely tied here to the Communist menace. Yet, race agitation proves equally as dangerous. Because the film had not yet been produced, Jackson's speech serves to illustrate the very limited ability to pose a critique of racist practices outside the liberal tolerance agenda. These difficulties are also evident in the novels of Himes and Okada.

Salt's silencing is well recorded, but some key points are worth recording here. Ceplair, for example, tells us that the film "would show for one week in Silver City, but Jarrico and Biberman decided not to attend the opening there because it conflicted with another opening in California—a decision that Virginia Jencks said evoked among the mining families 'bitter feelings against' them" (*Marxist* 154). This is doubly insulting when one recalls that a primary emphasis in the film and the making of the film centered around the dignity and respect of the Mexican American miners and their community. At the same time, while critics read the early Chicana feminism of the film as empowering, Tom Miller records that "Virginia [Jencks] is less cheery about the effect of *Salt of the Earth* on women. 'The movie didn't make any big difference. A lot of

[258] This speech is reminiscent of the lawyer's speech at the end of *Pinky*, where the lawyer connects poor treatment of racial minorities to America's image abroad.

women are still very much oppressed by the men. There's no difference in the home, I'm sorry to say. That's the way it was and that's the way it's going to be. It didn't change my life. You can't teach an old dog new tricks'" (36).[259] Miller also records that "Mine-Mill voted itself out of existence in 1966, with most locals, #890 included, switching over to the United Steel Workers of America" (36), a kind of sad ending to a beleaguered union. Finally, Benjamin Balthaser, in viewing the changes made from the original script to the shooting script argues that "Rather than contain merely a few objectionable scenes cut out by the union committee, the original, pre-production draft presents us with a very different vision of the film's meaning, one that in many respects is far more expansive, far more critical of the international Cold War" (348-49).[260] Thus, beyond its silencing, the film seems to have had less power to have a real effect on issues that proved essential in the film – dignity and respect for Mexican Americans, gains in feminism, a tolerance for dissent (even slightly Communist dissent) and union empowerment.

The Postwar Climate of Conformity and Fear: Politicians and Sociologists

How does *Salt of the Earth*, despite its blacklisted status and the controversy surrounding the making of the film, mesh with the notion of dissent in the early Cold War era? Surprisingly, the way *Salt of the Earth* fashioned its critique had a lot in

[259] Peter Morris adds that "In 1953, this theme [women's equality] was consistently ignored by the critics; now it gives the film an almost fashionable air" (490).
[260] Balthaser adds, "It emphasizes the paradox of the Cold War era, that to enter the "mainstream" and become "American" one also risks entering an exceptionalist discourse, no matter how radical one's politics. Since all that is Communist is indeed 'un American,' to remove the film's critique of anticommunism is also to limit its critique of U.S. imperialism, the Korean War, and the parallel institutional structures that maintain them" (365).

common with the acceptable avenues of dissent. The concept of the collective struggle, for example, was politically disregarded in the main in the postwar period in favor of individual struggle – a mass movement was too close to the group-think of totalitarianism and the individual seemed to become the vehicle for democracy in the postwar world.[261] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center* (1949) is characteristic of the liberal political climate in the postwar moment. Schlesinger, a founding member of the Americans for Democratic Action, a speech-writer for Adlai Stevenson, and "court historian" for John F. Kennedy, was a social critic with a lot of political sway. His understanding of dissent and conformity, therefore, play a large role in describing and shaping the political climate of the era. In *The Vital Center* he writes:

> Mid-twentieth-century liberalism, I believe, has thus been fundamentally reshaped by the hope of the New Deal, by the exposure of the Soviet Union, and by the deepening of our knowledge of man. The consequence of this historical re-education has been an unconditional rejection of totalitarianism and a reassertion of the ultimate integrity of the individual. This awakening constitutes the unique experience and fundamental faith of contemporary liberalism. (xxi)

Thus, despite the characterization of the era as conservative, conventional, and obedient, there was a strong call for "manly" dissent within the bounds of democracy. Democracy, in other words, would become totalitarian without the capacity for the individual to voice disagreement or make changes to the system. Schlesinger also

[261] *Salt of the Earth*'s emphasis on individuals within its strike attempts to mitigate, even if unintentionally, the impact of the strike on the audience.

argues, “I am certain that history has equipped modern American liberalism with the ideas and the knowledge to construct a society where men will be both free and happy. Whether we have the moral vigor to do the job depends on ourselves” (xxii). Thus, in many ways, *Salt of the Earth*, by focusing primarily on the individual struggles of the Quinteros, supported the notion that one should stand up for their beliefs in a (sometimes) unfair world.[262]

Schlesinger was also decidedly anti-Communist and participated in the fear mongering so characteristic of the burgeoning Manichean struggle with the Soviet Union. He writes, “As a social faith, lacking obvious national implications, Communism can rally its fifth columns in any corner of the world where injustice and poverty give it a foothold” (97). In other words, even though he strongly believes in fighting the Communist menace, Schlesinger embraces the notion that anti-Communism should not silence dissent. Schlesinger was not alone in tying the fear of Communism to its corollary fear: fear of weakness in the face of ideological struggle. Schlesinger writes that “The weakness of impotence is related to a fear of responsibility – a fear, that is, of making concrete decisions and being held to account for concrete consequences” (41). The individual must step up and challenge this pressure to conform: “The whole thrust of totalitarian indoctrination, as we have seen it, is to destroy the boundaries of

[262] Schlesinger, while a liberal, may not have been too keen, however, on the presentation of unions in the film. He writes, “the trade unions, while giving the working masses a sense of having an organization of their own, insure that the goals of this organization are compatible with capitalism. And, as unions become more powerful, they increase their vested interests in the existing order” (48).

individual personality" (84). Liberal radicalism, according to Schlesinger, had to alter its outlook and, he argues, "It has returned in great part to the historic philosophy of liberalism – to a belief in the integrity of the individual, in the limited state, in due process of law, in empiricism and gradualism" (156).[263] Thus, Schlesinger champions free speech and the right to dissent within the bounds of the democratic state. He writes:

> Popular ignorance about civil liberties is jeopardizing free discussion for everybody. It is threatening to turn us all into frightened conformists; and conformity can lead only to stagnation. We need courageous men to help us recapture a sense of the indispensability of dissent, and we need dissent if we are to make up our minds equably and intelligently. For freedom of discussion is an organic part of the process by which a democracy wins consent for its great decisions. (208)

In an era of conformity there is a fear of conformity. One must not go too far left, but one must also be able to question elements of the democratic system in place. He writes, "I have been talking thus far about the right of political agitation in a free society. That general right must be energetically maintained for all, I believe, up to the point where the speech produces illegal acts" (212). Thus, while he is for free speech, he only sanctions dissent that follows a legal course within democracy. Schlesinger adds, "But we must draw the line at opinion which results in the immediate and violent obliteration

[263] He adds, "The consequences of the unlimited state are so fatal to individual freedom and dignity that the new radicalism has no choice but to work with the limited state. But, in addition, experience suggests that the limited state can resolve the basic social questions which were supposed to compel a resort to the unlimited state" (152).

of the conditions of subsequent free discussion" (199). In *Salt of the Earth*, major emphasis is put not only on the validity of the miners' and their wives' grievances, but also on the legality of their dissent. In fact, some of Schlesinger's words make it seem as if a fight against a controlling mining company is exactly the struggle that individuals should be involved with: "we must somehow dissolve the anxieties which drive people in free society to become traitors to freedom. We must somehow give the lonely masses a sense of individual human function, we must restore community to the industrial order" (247). Restoration of community and dignity and an end to the discrimination and inequality of an industrial mine is the end goal and result of *Salt of the Earth*.

While Schlesinger has a clear influence on the articulation of the Communist menace as well as on the ideal democratic subject, he is not alone in his fear of conformity and consensus culture. As Alan Nadel tells us:

> It was a period, as many prominent studies indicated, when 'conformity' became a positive value in and of itself. The virtue of conformity – to some idea of religion, to 'middle-class' values, to distinct gender roles and rigid courtship rituals – became a form of public knowledge through the pervasive performances of and allusions to containment narratives. (4)

Despite being characterized by conformity, the era could be equally characterized as fearing mass-think.[264] Fears of conformity and consensus indicate two vital aspects of the period: First, that conformity culture was widespread and attractive – it is usually paired with consumption and capitalism and is often viewed positively. Second, that dissent became vital in this atmosphere, and yet had to cater to the dominant ideologies and trends of the day: anti-Communism, strict gender roles in the home, and belief in the possibilities of democracy. By looking at several social theory texts from the era, I hope to flesh out the contours of this seeming paradox that asks for both conformity and dissent. To begin with, Peter Viereck's 1956 *The Unadjusted Man* champions "independence from stereotypes, loyalty to organic roots" (317), and ties the loss of individuality to a loss of freedoms. He writes, "Without inner psychological liberty, outer civil liberties are not quite enough. We can talk civil liberties, prosperity, democracy with the tongues of men and angels, but it is merely a case of 'free from what?' and 'free for what?' if we use this freedom for no other purpose than to commit television [sic] or go lusting after supermarkets" (3). Thus, here, we see the fear of losing democracy to the cultural complacency, moral decay, and "mass think" associated with television and consumer culture. Thus, while the capitalist paradise of the home is the bastion of democracy and bulwark against Communism, it is also represents a threat to democracy in the form of mass think and mass consumption.

[264] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* comes to mind, which was first published in 1944.

Vance Packard's 1959 *The Status Seekers* also shows both the lure and the dangers of conformity culture. He focuses heavily on the new suburban landscape and argues that "The forces of the times seem to be conspiring to squeeze individuality and spontaneity from us" (258). He also suggests that "The people of this country have become increasingly preoccupied with status primarily because of the impact on their lives of big housing developments, big advertisers, big trade-unions, and big corporate hierarchies. As a result, democracy is still more of an ideal than a reality" (357). Thus, the pressure to conform to a lifestyle preoccupied with capitalist consumption is actually viewed as a threat to democracy, even as the same capitalist consumption was touted as a reward for military service and as the proof that capitalism worked.[265] Packard concludes his work with the seemingly contradictory statement that "In this time of transcendent challenge and danger to our way of life, it seems clear that we can endure and prevail only if the vast majority of our people really believe in our system. They must be genuinely convinced that our system offers fairer rewards and opportunities for the fulfillment of human aspiration than any other" (358-59). Thus, while the system may be choking the individuality out of people and thereby threatening democracy, Packard encouraged a belief in the political and economic structures of America and suggests that not believing in the system poses a "danger to our way of life." Whereas Schlesinger views mass think through the lens of political complacency, Packard and Viereck view it as social and domestic stagnation. They all

[265] For more on consumption as a reward for military service, see my discussion of *War Comes to America* in my chapter 1 and of *The Street* in my chapter 3.

suggest that these forms of mass think have their allure, but that they may be ruinous to democracy in that they silence dissent. All three also suggest that dissent should stay within permissible boundaries and one should not question the system.

Along these lines of valuing the system that seems, simultaneously, to be a system of control, is William H. Whyte, Jr.'s 1959 *The Organization Man*. He describes The Organization Man as one who follows the "social ethic," by which, he writes, "I mean that contemporary body of thought which makes morally legitimate the pressures of society against the individual. Its major propositions are three: a belief in the group as the source of creativity; a belief in 'belongingness' as the ultimate need of the individual; and a belief in the application of science to achieve the belongingness" (7). He also writes that "there is always the common thread that a man must belong and that he must be unhappy if he does not belong rather completely" (45). Thus Whyte's text encourages individuality and also describes how The Organization demands the forfeiture of independence. What is interesting about Whyte's take on the conformity/complacency fears is that he proclaims that one should not fall prey to the pressures of "belongingness" or group think, but says that "The man who drives a Buick Special and lives in a ranch-type house just like hundreds of other ranch-types houses can assert himself as effectively and courageously against his particular society as the bohemian against his particular society" (11).[266] Thus, conforming to capitalist

[266] Whyte writes, "This book is not a plea for nonconformity. Such pleas have an occasional therapeutic value, but as an abstraction, nonconformity is an empty goal, and rebellion against prevailing opinion merely because it is prevailing should no more be praised than acquiescence to it.

consumption (and perhaps some status seeking) is not in itself a detriment to individual freedoms, but certainly an inability to question the system is. He says that the newly popular use of personality tests in hiring are more or less "loyalty tests" and says that "Neither in the questions nor in the evaluation of them are the tests neutral; they are loaded with values, organization values, and the result is a set of yardsticks that reward the conformist, the pedestrian, the unimaginative—at the expense of the exceptional individual without whom no society, organization or otherwise, can flourish" (182). Here, Whyte describes the "yardstick" by which individuals are judged, and he suggests that conformity to domestic and social norms are the units of measure. It seems here, too, that dissent is valued in this era and that it is fear of conformity and totalitarianism that breeds this high regard for freedom of speech and debate. Whyte argues that in the contemporary organization, "the lesson is plain. It is not for the individual to question the system" (245). Thus, whether talking about the right way to be iconoclastic (as in Viereck), the dangers of capitalist consumption (as in Packard), or the mass think within the corporation (as in Whyte), all of these authors describe a landscape where dissent is sanctioned and permissible within the boundaries of democracy. All three also tie conformity to consumption, even as they tout capitalism as the best system. These contradictory impulses about what it means to be mainstream show up in the novels of Himes and Okada.

Indeed, it is often a mask for cowardice, and few are more pathetic than those who flaunt outer differences to expiate their inner surrender" (10).

This chapter, then, considers the place of dissent (and "belongingness") when it is voiced through a racial minority. I have shown how *Salt of the Earth* attempted to mitigate its critique and stay within the bounds of democratic and legal dissent, but how it was nonetheless characterized as a threat to democracy because of its association with race and with Communism. In Chester Himes's 1945 *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and in John Okada's *No-No Boy* both authors present protagonists who voice dissent at the same time that they search for some form of social or community belongingness or dignity within the public sphere. Schlesinger, Packard, Viereck, and Whyte all address either the need to extend civil liberties to African Americans and other racial minorities or comment on the difficulty racial minorities face in their social status and class positioning. Schlesinger, for example, suggests that "Most Americans accept, at least in principle, the obligations spelled out in the Civil Rights report. The strengthened civil rights plank in the Democratic platform helped President Truman win the election" (190). He also writes that "Popular fiction and the movies, with *Kingsblood Royal* and *Gentleman's Agreement*, have enlisted in the battle against racism" (190). Thus, Schlesinger aligns himself with the liberal tolerance agenda of the era and becomes its proponent when he suggests that change is on the horizon. Schlesinger also encourages dissent for racial minorities, but limits that dissent to legal paths. He writes, "While we may not be able to repeal prejudice by law, yet law is an essential part of the enterprise of education which alone can end prejudice. It may be foolish to think that we can transform folkways and eradicate bigotry overnight. But it is fatal not to maintain an

unrelenting attack on all forms of racial discrimination" (190-1). Beyond welcoming their dissent, Schlesinger does not envision racial minorities in the landscape of conformity that he so fears.

Viereck, while not focusing extensively on the issue of minorities in *The Unadjusted Man*, nonetheless clarifies the differences between legal and psychological equality. He argues that legal equality is possible and desirable and that "inequality in that sphere weakens liberty by making it seem hypocritical" (42). But he suggests that psychological equality is "indefinable" and "intangible" and that "equality is impossible" (42). Thus, the racial minority in America may be barred from the sense of belongingness that comes with participation in conformity culture. He cheers *Brown vs. Board* as psychological equality at its best: "removing racial segregation in schools, thereby reducing psychological bruises that would otherwise discredit as hypocritical the first (legal) equality of the Fourteenth Amendment" (43). Thus, while he does not go into detail, Viereck, like Schlesinger, champions the legal (and therefore gradualist) approach to civil rights at the same time that he suggests that psychological equality would create a sense of belongingness in and parity with mainstream culture.

Packard suggests that African Americans and other minorities can benefit from conformity to white norms. According to Packard, race creates a secondary class status despite economic standing, and "while a white person can sometimes work up from a low social status to a high one, a colored man can never work up to being a white man" (53). Yet, he argues, "What some can do, however, is seek to separate themselves as far

as possible from the lower-class Negroes through achievement and style of life" (54). And Packard adds that this can be done by conforming to white norms. He writes, "The higher-status Negroes pattern their behavior after what they perceive to be the white model" (54). Thus, in a book ostensibly questioning the trappings of class and status in America, the author envisions black progress stemming from a distancing from the racial community and from an adoption of white norms (which he elsewhere condemns for being too conforming and status seeking). Whyte also discusses class and the color line, and argues that conformity will advance one's entrance into the mainstream. He writes, "In somewhat the same way that Americaninzation affected succeeding waves of immigrants, acclimatization to the middle class will lessen the feeling of social vulnerability" (310). Yet, even as he understands the allure of the white conformity culture, he describes how in the suburb of Park Forrest, Illinois the illusion of classlessness "stops very sharply at the color line" (311). Thus, even as all of these authors discuss race, fear mass think, sanction dissent, and delineate the lure and the benefits of conformity culture, none of their texts go into detail about what it means for African Americans and other minorities to try to "belong" and what this "belongingness" might have to do with dissent in a democracy. Like the liberal tolerance films before them, they are unable to envision the racial subject at home in America.[267] Yet, I argue,

[267] Indeed, after a brief discussion about how class can be viewed as a horizontal hierarchy, Packard tells us that race should be viewed vertically (in other words, essentially unable to move up in status). He then distances himself and his audience from these "abnormalities" and turns back to white class and status. He writes, "We are now ready to examine, in some detail, the indicators of status that are most *commonly* recognized, and most *commonly* sought. These marks of status establish the prestige rating we receive in the class structure" (emphasis added, 56).

Himes and Okada do attempt to envision what happens to the racial subject when they voice dissent – in the landscape of America at this time, it seems, they must negotiate with the inherent paradox of the conformity/dissent divide.

Holding Back the Tide: Understanding Compromise in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*

Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* follows the protagonist, Bob Jones, through five grueling days where Jones faces racism, fights, beatings, fears, and impotent rage. Jones is virulently anti-white, sexist, and angry. Jones is a leaderman, a position of some authority, at a shipyard in wartime Los Angeles, but he can barely keep his fear and rage in check as he deals with white co-workers, who give him minimal authority, and white society in general, whom he feels are always giving him the eye because he is black. Jones is fashioned in the hardboiled[268] style, and he often conceals a biting remark just below the surface of his acquiescence to authority figures. Jones is dating Alice, who is a social worker and is the very light-skinned daughter of one of the richest black families in Los Angeles. He soon loses his status as leaderman, and his draft deferment, when he insults a white woman, Madge, by calling her a "cracker bitch" after she has refused to with a "nigger" (27). Before they even meet, Madge provokes Jones by putting on an act: "she deliberately put on a frightened, wide-eyed look and backed away from me as if she was scared stiff, as if she was a naked virgin and I was King Kong" (19). After he insults Madge, the story progresses swiftly, showing Jones's efforts to follow Alice's advice that he try to regain his position at the shipyard and find

[268] For more on Himes and *If He Hollers* as hardboiled, see Eileen Boris, Christopher Breu, and Stanley Orr.

comfort and belonging despite racial discrimination; his attempts to alternately overpower Madge and another white co-worker so that he can feel some semblance of power; his encounters with the entrenched racism of California that has been given new life from the influx of Southern migrants; and the eventual charge of rape leveled by Madge in retaliation for losing a battle in their power struggle. In the end, Jones's beaten and defeated body is dragged from a police station to an army recruiting center, and his fate is left up to his ability, says the judge who sentences him, to "Make a good record, get an honourable [sic] discharge" (203).[269]

Critical attention on *If He Hollers Let Him Go* varies in focus, though most critics agree that the novel wages some form of protest.[270] Christopher Breu writes that "Himes' novels are designed to shock or disturb, producing narratives that not only resist categorization but also flaunt conventional morality and eschew easy recuperation by any single ethical or political position" (766). Laurie Champion and Bruce A. Glasrud argue that Himes's work, because set in the West, is focused on the inability for African Americans to achieve the American Dream. They write, "His works set in the West (primarily in California) during the 1940s demonstrate that because African Americans came to the West seeking the promise of racial equality, they especially were disappointed when the promise was not fulfilled" (7). Hazel V. Carby similarly argues that Himes "should be regarded as a barometer of the American dream.

[269] Himes uses British spellings throughout the text; this will be reflected in the quotations.
[270] For comparisons to Wright and Ellison, see Eileen Boris, Christopher Breu, A. Robert Lee, Maureen Liston, Stephanie Brown, and Edward Margolies and Michel Fabre.

Revisioning the 'sunshine state' of California as the epitome of the twentieth-century version of that dream allows th[is] writer[] to document how the condition of black existence is an important measure of who paid for and suffered in its shadows" (270).[271] Stephanie Brown calls Himes a "postmodern satirist" (78), while Edward Margolies and Michel Fabre say that he directs his ire against all classes and colors (51).[272] Lynn M. Itagaki importantly argues that the novel addresses global oppression through cross-racial alliances, stressing especially Himes's mention of both the internment of Japanese Americans and the Zoot Suit Riots as points of racial tension in wartime Los Angeles. In discussing the final scene in the novel where Jones is led off to the recruiting center along with two Mexican Americans, Itagaki writes, "While their circumstances most obviously show the subjection of racialized bodies to military and economic structures, their final gesture of solidarity simultaneously offers the possibility for future interracial mobilization and shared community."[273] Finally, David Ikard supplies a necessary feminist critique of the novel, arguing that:

---

[271] Kevin Allen Leonard adds that "Like many African Americans who had arrived in Los Angeles before him, Himes had been led to believe that the discrimination he would encounter in the Southern California metropolis would be less severe than the persecution blacks endured in other cities. His experiences in Los Angeles frustrated his expectations, however: he was denied access to jobs and to restaurants, theaters, and other businesses because of his 'race.' Himes's experiences in Los Angeles between 1941 and 1944, when he left for New York, were not exceptional" (309).
[272] Christopher Breu sees this negativity as a positive: "As I have argued, this positive potential is linked to the very power of negative representation itself. This power resides in negative representation's ability to provide a site of transference for a cultural praxis of collective working-through, one that has the potential to produce new forms of political agency and more politically efficacious uses of the forms of negativity that haunt the American cultural landscape" (790).
[273] Carby adds, "*if he hollers let him go* [sic] consistently moves across and through a variety of spatial scales, the local, the national, and the global, each overdetermined by ideologies of masculinity, with act *simultaneously* to reassert and reframe relations between processes of racialization and definitions of citizenship. Los Angeles enables Himes to represent how racialization

> My black male feminist reading of *If He Hollers* interrogates Himes's rendering of women—black and white—as proponents of black male social emasculation. Focusing attention on the marginalized perspectives of the black women in the text, I reconsider the received image of Bob Jones, the central protagonist, as a "Black Everyman." Illuminating Himes's phallocentric assumptions regarding black women, this perspective calls attention to the erasure of the black female social perspectives in the novel.[274]

If He Hollers Let Him Go cannot be read without this feminist critique in mind. Indeed, Himes's narrative voice gives little credit to black (or white) women in the novel and both are shown as emasculating black men. Ikard argues that this causes "his project of black resistance to white racism [to be] is gendered in ways that reify rather than subvert white patriarchy." Ikard also suggests that Jones is not only invested in white patriarchy, but also middle-class values, since he views white men as models of behavior and ingests their trapping of success, their prejudices, and their sexism as symbols of power.

While most critics agree that Himes is leveling some form of dissent in his novel, they do not situate his critique in the wartime atmosphere of Los Angeles or with the

---

and citizenship coalesce, accumulate, concentrate, intensify and, ultimately, penetrate through the skin to the body of Robert Jones, arguably the most localized site of all" (261).

[274] This argument seems to be speaking directly to the critic Stephen F. Milliken, who wrote of Jones as an "average man" (84) and "a normal decent man" (96). Milliken argues that "And the very manliness of his choice, his intransigent insistence on a full set of options, universalize him, making him a kind of modern Everyman, the archetypal protagonist of tragedy, steadfastly refusing every infringement on his full humanity, however 'little' the Alices of the world may consider them" (96).

ideal that the fulfillment of democracy lies, partly at least, in dissent itself.[275] Jones, while voicing his dissent variously throughout the text (in addition to Himes voicing dissent through other characters), also feels the pull toward conformity or consensus culture – promoted in a big way through propagandized unity and wartime depictions of "what we're fighting for" focusing on the home and family life. Himes places in protagonists within paradox of the era and shows the ways in which the pull towards conformity and the compulsion to dissent interact in the life of his character.

We first meet Bob Jones as he wakes up from a dream – he is gripped with fear. Himes writes, "I kept my eyes shut tight. But I began feeling scared in spite of hiding from the day. It came along with consciousness […] It seeped down my spine, into my arms, spread through my groin with an almost sexual torture, settled in my stomach like butterfly wings. For a moment I felt torn all loose inside, shriveled, paralysed, as if after a while I'd have to get up and die" (2). Jones attributes this fear to the general sense of racism he found in California but specifically to the explosion of racial tensions stemming from the attacks on Pearl Harbor the and subsequent internment of the Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. Jones thinks:

> Maybe it had started then [when he couldn't find work in California], I'm not sure, or maybe it wasn't until I'd seen them send the Japanese away that I'd noticed it. Little Riki Oyana singing 'God Bless America' and going to Santa Anita

[275] Hazel Carby goes to the most trouble to characterize Himes's dissent. She writes that Himes's work contains "significant acts of dissent: dissent from the perpetuation of injustice in contemporary politics; dissent from the increasing extremes of wealth and poverty; and dissent from the parasitic relation of the United States to the earth and its environment" (270).

> with his parents the next day. It was taking a man up by the roots and locking him up without a chance. Without a trial. Without a charge. Without even giving him a chance to say one word. It was thinking about if they ever did that to me, Robert Jones, Mrs. Jones's dark son, that started me to getting scared. (3)

In this passage, Himes brings together a critique of the promise that patriotism will be read as a sign of Americanism and that Americanism will protect the racial subject from unfair accusations. A belief in the system, in other words, does not exonerate Little Riki from the charges that he and his entire race are un-American and alien. Himes also ties together the mistreatment of the people of Japanese descent to the actual and potential abuse of blacks. Jones thinks, "I was the same colour as the Japanese and I couldn't tell the difference. 'A yeller-bellied Jap' coulda meant me too" (4). At the same time, by ignoring the laws of the land when it came to internment, the lynch laws of the south have been transported to the golden West, something that has Jones scared.

Initially, Jones left Cleveland for Los Angeles because "Cleveland wasn't the land of the free or the home of the brave either," and he wanted fairer treatment in hiring and on the job (4). When Jones gets to Los Angeles, he is willing to compromise – he is willing to accept some racial discrimination so long as he gets to live with dignity and respect. He thinks, "Race was a handicap, sure, I'd reasoned. But hell, I didn't have to marry it. I went where I wanted and felt good about it" (3). This ability to look beyond discrimination allows Jones to feel more powerful and more free. Jones thinks, "When I came out to Los Angeles in the fall of '41, I felt fine about everything. Taller than the

average man, six feet two, broad-shouldered, and conceited, I hadn't a worry. I knew I'd get along" (3). Yet the daily presence of discrimination and the internment rent this confidence from Jones and formed a barrier to his ability to conform to an ideal image of himself or America. Instead, he feels that "I was tired of keeping ready to die every minute; it was too much strain. I had to fight hard enough each day just to keep on living. All I wanted was for the white folks to let me alone; not say anything to me; not even look at me. They could take the goddamned world and go to hell with it" (4). Thus in the first few pages of the novel, Himes forms the basis of his critique of American wartime culture and, I will argue, follows a similar pattern throughout the text: Jones wants to be happy, but cannot feel so unless he feels he has some power or dignity within the white world. Jones levels a critique at the structures of racism and oppression, but he also wants access to the privileges and securities of whiteness (or, as wartime propaganda would have it, Americanness and unity).

Through Jones, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* voices dissent against major American wartime institutions such as unions, the war industries, and the military. Dissent in regards to these aspects of American life is found throughout the black press during the war, even as those same media outlets support patriotism and participation in homefront and military patriotism.[276] The push and pull of these dual drives – to support the war effort (often with hopes of delayed rewards) or to demand civil rights and social equality – form the center tension of Jones's microcosm of Los Angeles. Himes has the

[276] For more on the black press and its relationship to patriotism and dissent, see my chapter 3.

reader tense from Jones's fearful awakening;[277] what finally breaks the tension is Jones's encounter with Madge – he asks her to tack something for him and she says, "'I ain't gonna work with no nigger!'" (27), and he says, "'Screw you then, you cracker bitch!'" (27). As a leaderman, Jones is supposed to have authority and Madge is supposed to be his subordinate. When Jones takes his issue to the union steward, Herbie Frieberger, the next day, he voices his dissent as he accuses the union of racism and ineffectuality. His demand is simple; he tells Herbie, "'I want you to tell [Madge] she has to work with Negroes here or lose her job'" (113). But Herbie puts Jones off. He says, "If we tried that, half the workers in the year would walk out. I hate to think of what might happen" (113) – Herbie capitulates to white mob rule, but Jones says, "'If a third-grade tacker can get a leaderman bumped every cracker dame here is going to figure she can make a beef and get any Negro bumped—'" (113). Here, Herbie asks Jones for compromise, gradualism, less violence, and a softening of his demands: "'Damn, old man, take in some of your muscle, you'll get us all shot. Just take it easy and you'll live longer. Listen, if you take it easy for a month or two, I promise you—'" (113). Just as Schlesinger cautions that one should not go beyond the permissible routes of dissent, so too does Herbie want Jones to avoid making trouble. Yet, it could also be argued, as Himes does, that Jones's critique is valid but that race is the reason for the delay. Himes characterizes the union as ineffectual and mildly corrupt, but the dissent Jones voices does not end there.

[277] This uneasiness continues as Jones drives to work – he jockeys for position with white motorists and seeing every move as racial (13-14).

Jones gets fed up and tells Herbie it's a Jim Crow union. Himes writes, "'If it hadn't been for the union you wouldn't been working here now—' [Herbie says]. 'That's a goddamn lie!' I said. 'The only reason this company started hiring Negroes is because they couldn't get enough white workers who wanted to work in this dirty yard. This lousy local never fought for Negroes to be hired—probably fought against it—'" (114). Indeed, as Douglas Flamming argues, it was not Franklin Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) that brought African Americans out to California. Instead, he notes, "The rapid, massive rise of wartime industries created a labor shortage that, midway through the war, sparked a huge exodus of southern blacks to California's urban centers, where they took jobs in the shipbuilding and airframe industries" (292). Jones, therefore, refuses to be placated by the president's *directive*,[278] and instead reemphasizes that blacks (and other minorities, including poor Southern whites) are needed to fill a labor demand.

The conclusion of their conversation demonstrates the expansiveness of Jones's dissent. Himes writes:

> 'The whole movement ain't little Jesus Christ to me,' I said. 'Either you're all the way for me, or you're all the way against me. I don't play the middle.' 'That's the trouble with you coloured people,' he shouted, getting agitated. 'You forget we're in a war. This isn't any time for private gripes. We're fighting fascism—

[278] Later in the novel, Jones has a talk with his supervisor, Mac, who emphasizes that the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) could only issues directives, not laws, about hiring minorities in the war industries.

> we're not fighting the companies and we're not fighting each other—we're all fighting fascism together and in order to beat fascism we got to have unity. We got to have union in the union and unity on the job—' 'That's fine, Comrade Marx, that's wonderful,' I cut him off. 'Let's you and me unite and start right here fighting fascism. Let's go down and give this cracker dame some lessons in unity and if she doesn't want to unite let's tell her about the war—' 'Aw, goddamnit, you want to agitate!' he shouted. 'I'm not Communist and you know it.' (114)

Here, Jones characterizes the union as a proponent of gradualism in regards to racial equality and refuses to enlist in that paradigm. It is also important the Herbie concentrates on wartime unity as a means of dispelling tension – the "unity" of war, according to the logic of the conversation, is only used to smooth over racial tension on the side of blacks. Whites, the logic would have it, are allowed to decide when and with whom they will "unite" on the job or otherwise. Jones's accusation that the union is Communist (he begins calling Herbie and the other union men "comrade" at the beginning of the scene) distances himself from the far left and therefore strengthens his critique and its patriotic sentiments. Herbie's own disavowal of Communism, on the other hand, separates him from the anti-racist focus of the American Communism and thus suggests a double betrayal – as a union man and as a Communist. Like the New Mexican miners, Himes purposefully disassociates his protagonist from Communist ideologies. While *Salt of the Earth* is characterized as left-leaning and was produced by

Communists and Communist sympathizers, it is important to note, as I have argued above, that the film steers away from a direct endorsement of Communism and instead heavily focuses on the validity and legality of the miners' claims. Additionally, during WWII, American Communists supported the war for democracy.[279] By disassociating himself from Communism Jones critique becomes, also like the miners, focused on racial equality – a valid critique, according to Schlesinger, but one that is nonetheless volatile in the era. The way Himes characterizes it, Jones's dissent is valid and lawful within the context of the war industries and the union and it demonstrates patriotism. At the same time, Herbie's capitulation to white supremacist attitudes tarnishes his offer of a compromise.

What the union allows, the company allows too, and Jones also voices dissent over the discriminatory nature of the war industries themselves. Himes uses the same issue, Madge disrespecting Jones and getting away with it and Jones losing his leaderman position, to foster Jones's critique of industry.[280] Shortly after their run-in, Jones is called to the supervisor's office, where the supervisor, MacDougal, chastises Jones for his behavior (Madge never receives a reprimand). MacDougal blames Jones for not keeping his head on the job and tell Jones that he should have had sense enough to get rid of the "chip on his shoulder" and that "'You know how Southern people talk, how

[279] See my discussion of *The People's Voice* and *The Street* in my chapter 3.
[280] Jones's fellow black co-workers offer varying postures of resistance when they find out about Jones's demotion. Himes writes, "Each one had a different idea. Red said they all ought to quit. Smitty was for talking to Mac. Pigmeat said they ought to mess up the work so it'd have to done over. Conway thought they ought to form a committee to go see some of the big shots in the front office. George said they ought to organize all the coloured workers in the yard and strike" (104). But none of these ideas are enacted.

they feel about working with you coloured boys. They have to get used to it, you gotta give them time. What makes me so mad with you is, goddamnit, you know this. I don't have to tell you what could have happened by your cursing a white woman, you know as well as I do'" (29). Again, the white man in authority capitulates to Southern whites and expects Jones to accept the notion that "gradually" things will change. In other words, Jones is supposed to accept the sting of racial slurs on the job while Southerners adapt to a desegregated work place. Jones complains earlier in the novel that his position of authority is hardly so since there is always a white man checking over his shoulder or a secretary questioning his ability to look at blueprints. In this incident, Himes verifies that the shipyard puts more credence into white supremacist hierarchies than in their own internal ranking. This, in many way, reinforces Packard and Whyte's contention that class status is based on the color line.

Jones went through several legal and accepted channels for redress, but he found them asking for patience or adjustment. The paradox of the conformity/dissent model, then, shows up in Himes – what should a racial subject do in this situation? Does the injustice allow for a more stringent critique or should they wait for things to change slowly? In this case, Jones attempts to bargain with this lack of power in the workplace. Unlike the miners and their wives in *Salt of the Earth*, Jones finds his dignity through the thought of violently overpowering the whites that threaten him. He finds himself making two bargains – he is going to rape Madge and he is going to kill Johnny Stoddart (a man who brutally beat Jones after Jones won a craps game in the shipyard). While he

actualizes neither and waivers in his determination, he feels the effects of the very thought of these actions. Immediately after talking to MacDougal, Jones decides to kill Johnny Stoddart. He thinks, "I wanted him to feel as scared and powerless and unprotected as I felt every goddamn morning I woke up. I wanted him to know how it felt to die without a chance; how it felt to […] sit there and take it like I had to take it from Kelly and Hank and Mac and the cracker bitch because nobody was going to help him or stop it or do anything about it at all" (35-36). This determination to make a white man feel the way that he does creates in Jones a sense of power and freedom. Himes writes, "Just the thought of it did something for me; just contemplating it. All the tightness that had been in my body, making my motions jerky, keeping my muscles taut, left me and I felt relaxed, confident, strong. I felt just like I thought a white boy oughta feel; I had never felt so strong in all my life" (38).[281] It is clear that Jones seeks parity with whites. Because he imagines violence as the way to that equality, he subtly reveals that the structure of white oppression is based on violence and that it is not out of nowhere that Jones pictures violence as a way into that power structure.

Jones attempts to compromise with the white world. If he can kill Stoddart (who he later starts referring to as "my boy" (43)), then he will be patient with racism and will even be patriotic. Once Jones feels he has enacted his bargain, Himes shows him opening up to the idea of patriotism and service to country. Jones views the immense production industry on the coast and thinks:

[281] Himes also writes, "I felt a sudden compelling friendliness toward the white people I passed. I felt like waving to them and saying, 'It's all right now. It's fine, solid, it's a great deal'" (38).

> I felt the size of it, the immensity of the production. I felt the importance of it, the importance of the whole war. I'd never given a damn one way or the other about the war excepting wanting to keep out of it; and at first when I wanted the Japanese to win. And now I did; I was stirred as I had been when I was a little boy watching a parade, seeing the flag go by. That filled-up feeling of my country. I felt included in it all; I had never felt included before. It was a wonderful feeling. (38)

Patriotism and support for the war effort is what Jones is *supposed* to feel, and this moment highlights Jones's interest in participating in the mainstream world – as long as he can feel dignity or feel that he on level with whites – and highlights the pull of the "unity" campaigns. While, if acted upon, his violent intent would be outside the law, Himes pointedly shows that white supremacy (in this case materialized in an unfair fight where the white aggressor is not punished) also works outside the law.

Jones enacts a similar grab for power with Madge. It is Don, a white man, however, who suggests this idea to Jones, and Jones, though loath to accept it initially, buys into the white patriarchy, as Ikard suggests above, that the man offers by giving Jones Madge's address.[282] At the same time, this "offer" degrades Madge and it is this degradation by white men that makes Jones's inability to talk to Madge or get near her so degrading in turn. At the same time, when Himes draws Madge as a hideous and

[282] Himes writes, "'Some stinker,' [Don] said. 'What she needs is a good going over by someone.' I knew he wanted to say by some coloured fellow but just couldn't bring himself to say it. Instead he got redder and said, 'It'd take some of the stinking prejudice out of her'" (118).

desperate woman, he (although in an anti-feminist manner) attempts to comment on the baselessness of white supremacy, since all she has is her color. Jones thinks, "I was going to have her. I was going to have to make her as low as a white whore in a Negro slum—a scrummy two-dollar whore … I was going to have to so I could keep looking the white folks in the face" (123). In considering where this leaves him on the hierarchy (very low indeed), he decides that by running her status down and forcing her below (literally and figuratively) black men, he is then going to have some semblance of power among white men – this is precisely the type of trade off that Esperanza tries to avoid in *Salt of the Earth*. In considering that by losing his leaderman status and possibly his job that he might be drafted, he bargains, "If I had to fight and die for the country I'd fight and die for it. I'd even go so far as to believe it was my country too. But I'd be damned if I was going to be afraid to make this woman because she was white Texas" (123). Thus, again, Jones is pulled toward the lure of social equality and even of the patriotism of war by the promise that in an act of violence he will somehow gain parity with whites. The bargain, of course, cannot go in his favor, however, because you cannot bargain, the novel suggests, with white aggression.[283]

[283] In a discussion with Tom Leighton, a white friend of Alice (Jones's girlfriend), Jones considers the prospect of violent revolution. Leighton says, "'But as far as the problem of the Negro industrial worker is concerned, I feel that it is not so much racial as it is the problem of the masses. As soon as the masses, including all of our minority groups, have achieved economic security, racial problems will reach a solution of their own accord'" (88). To which Jones replies, "'I don't know about any other minority group problem,' I said, 'but the only solution to the Negro problem is a revolution. We've got to make white people respect us and the only thing white people have ever respected is force" (89).

In fact, it is his very attempt to degrade Madge that backfires on him. Don gives Jones Madge's address and after Jones had mustered up the courage to talk to Madge during lunch, he decides to go to her apartment. She lets him in, but they struggle. While the struggle is indicative of rape, it is Madge's use of the word "rape" that immediately changes Jones's mind, draws him to his feet, and tears him away from the apartment. This fear, linked, as I will argue, to Jones's fear of being "locked up without a trial" brought on by the internment, counteracts the power he felt over her – she, in other words, demonstrates the power of white supremacy, which trumps his physical strength. Outside the apartment Jones thinks, "I was through and I knew it; the white folks had won again and I wanted out. But I couldn't let her get away with it. I didn't want her to have that satisfaction. So I said coldly and deliberately and in a hard, even voice: 'You look like mud to me, sister, like so much dirt. Just a big beat bitch with dirty feet. And if it didn't take so much trouble I'd made a whore out of you'" (148). Yet, Jones's attempt to smear the embodied symbol of white power that Madge represents in the novel only proves the power of racism all the more. A few days later, as Jones is determined to set his course right again, he accidentally finds Madge in a small room on the ship. She locks him in and screams rape. The inevitable then occurs – Jones is beat to within inches of his life and is summarily thrown upon the mercy of the justice system, which, having been told that Madge dropped the charges, sends Jones off to the army for forced conscription. Indeed, MacDougal told Jones right away that he would lose his job deferment. When he learns this Jones thinks, "All of a sudden I got that

crazy, scared feeling I'd waked up with that morning. It had happened in a second; my job was gone and I was facing the draft; like the Japanese getting pulled up by the roots. But I couldn't find a thing to say in my defense" (30). Thus, the initial insult of the white woman hurls Jones toward his injudicial fate – as he expected, he gets forced into the army without a trial and without a charge, despite a belief that either the union or the war industry or an alignment with white patriarchy would save him from that fate. The social injustice in the novel, in other words, has produced violence on both sides of the color line. As Schlesinger predicted, without social justice, the possibility for violence is high.

What is behind Jones's presence in Los Angeles and what makes the conscription at the end of the novel so damning, is that Jones has leveled a critique against the segregated army and of blacks fighting for a country that denies them their freedoms at home. Dissent aimed at military conscription to a segregated army unfortunately does not make the choice between prison or military service any easier. Yet, Jones does consider his options. Shortly after he talked with the union steward, Jones thinks, "I stood there on the deck for a time, looking out across the harbor. A cruiser was silhouetted against the skyline. The white folks are still going strong, I thought; then I thought about the black sailors aboard waiting on the white. In the good old American tradition, I thought; the good old American way" (115).[284] For Jones, serving in the

[284] The idea of blacks serving whites as the "American way" is also addressed by Elise (Madge's Texan cousin). Elise argues that blacks and whites are both Americans and have a right to good war wages, but she also says that God made whites white because God is white and that "'Not that I say coloured

Armed Forces meant serving whites – not just in the servile manner expected of blacks in the Navy, but also serving the ends of white America in war[285] – and this notion runs counter to the concept of dignity that he wants to attain. Belongingness, in other words, cannot be achieved when he is made to serve because of his race, and therefore military service, for Himes, cannot provide the sense of unity for blacks as it seemingly does for whites. Jones considers what mass dissent would look like and thinks:

> I wondered what would happen if all the Negroes in America would refuse to serve in the armed forces, refuse to work in war production until the Jim Crow pattern was abolished. The white folks would no doubt go right on fighting the war without us, I thought—and no doubt win it. They'd kill us maybe; but they couldn't kill us all. And if they did they'd have one hell of a job of burying us. (115-16)

While pessimistic, the daydream reflects both Himes and Jones's belief that the only way to change things is by revolution. Bruce Glasrud reports that "Himes' petition [in 'Now is the Time! Here is the Place!'] for blacks to take action against racism parallels his belief that equality can be achieved only through revolution" (398). At the same

---

folks should have to serve white people, but you know yo'self God got dark angels in heaven what serve the white ones—that's in the Bible plain enough for anybody to see. And the sooner you coloured folks learn that, then the better off you'll be'" (133).

[285] Homer, a co-worker of Jones's, expresses the distance he feels from America's war goals when he says, "Ain't no need of none of us running round here fighting these white folks. All you gotta do is get 'em fighting 'monst themselves. Look what they doing in Europe right this minute, killing each other off like flies" (106-07).

time, Jones realizes that blacks do not have strength in numbers.[286] Here, Himes makes clear the power differential between blacks and whites, not just in numbers, but in the legal codes that back up white power. This inequality marks the paradox between conformity and dissent all the more confusing. While Jones understands the power of mass protest and action, he does not have the same faith or organizational structure necessary to start a movement as the mining community had in *Salt of the Earth*. Yet, Jones's violent solutions to his problems, Himes recognizes, fall outside of the legal and sanctioned modes of dissent. Thus, Himes's work comprises a pessimistic projection on the ability to voice dissent and live through it – even as the novel itself constitutes a protest against this limitation.

A strong statement against the military, however, is voiced through Ben – a graduate of Berkley and an outspoken co-worker of Jones's. Himes writes, "'I don't know what the hell I'd do if they called me,' Ben said. 'Every time a coloured man get in the Army he's fighting against himself. Of course there isn't anything else he can do. If he refuses to go they send him to the pen. But if he does go and take what they put on him, and then fight so he can keep on taking it, he's a cowardly son of a bitch'" (120). Ben's critique of the military goes beyond Jim Crow; the way he has it, if you support the war effort, you support the aims of an America that Jim Crows its civilians as well as its

[286] Himes makes the size and force difference between blacks and whites palpable if you juxtapose two scenes. In one Alice says to Jones, "'Hi darling,' she greeted, leaning over to open the door. 'You look like a worker in a CIO win-the-war poster.'[…] 'I'm the twelve million black faces,' I said" (164). Referencing Richard Wright's famous work, Jones here suggests both the optimism and struggle of black peoples in America. Yet, later, as he is being lynched by his white co-workers after Madge cries rape, Jones thinks, "I saw a hundred million white faces, distorted with rage" (181). See also Jones's conversation with Leighton pg. 88-89.

military, and enforces white supremacy in both legal and extralegal forms. Ben then shows that democracy cannot be won through the war, but has to be won at home. Himes writes, "'Any time a Negro says he believes in democracy but won't die to enforce it—I say he's a coward,' Ben declared. 'I don't care who he is. If Bob lets them put him in the Army he's a coward. If you let them put you in the Army you're a coward. As long as the Army is Jim Crowed a Negro who fights in it is fighting against himself'" (121). Since fighting for the country meant fighting for segregation, then the text argues that the war cannot possibly promote white and black (and Other) unity in America. Ben argues that by helping the U.S. win the war, one would be helping the U.S. maintain its structures of white supremacy. Dying for democracy, as the concept of wartime unity promotes, would mean violently or fatally resisting conscription to force structural change – change that would strengthen, not weaken, democracy.

Jones, pondering the draft, thinks, "I'd be in there soon myself, if I didn't get my job back, I thought, looking at the long lean cruiser. I gripped the rail until my knuckles showed white through the brown, clamped my teeth until my jaw ached. I wouldn't take it, I told myself; I just wouldn't take it, that was all" (116). As noted above, Jones admits that he would just as soon reverse this refusal if it meant he could have respect and dignity (meaning, in the above example, power over a white woman). That he would "die for his country" and "believe it" suggests that, like Ben, he is asking for respect and a viable life within the white world before he is willing to fight. Jones thinks, "I'd settled for a leaderman job at Atlas Shipyard—if I could be a man, defined by Webster as a male

human being. That's all I'd ever wanted—just to be accepted as a man—without ambition, without distinction, either of race, creed, or colour; just a simple Joe walking down an American street, going my simple way, without any other identifying characteristics but weight, height, and gender" (153).[287] His ambition is to make loose the distinctions of race via the attainment of generalized "manhood." Like the miners in *Salt of the Earth*, the dignity of the worker and the Chicano/a proved high stakes in the fight against Empire Zinc. At the same time, like the miners, Jones feels that the dignity and respect of women is secondary to his quest, but, unlike the miners, doesn't repent his idea that it is partly through the repression of women that he can attain power.[288]

In Jones's desire for dignity there intentionally lies a socially acceptable critique and a desire for the conformity culture that characterizes (white) American culture. His ambitions are for social equality. Jones thinks, "If I couldn't live in America as an equal in the minds, hearts, and souls of all white people, if I couldn't know that I had a chance to do anything any other American could, to go as high as an American citizenship would carry anybody, there'd never be anything in this country for me anyway" (154). Just as Whyte and Packard point out, Jones can see the how race determines class status in America, regardless of economic standing. Thus, Jones asks for full acceptance without conditions. Unlike *Pinky*, for example, where Pinky can only be as good as the best black nurse in her area, Jones will not settle for what he calls "nigger-rich" (153), in other

[287] Again, the importance he places on being a "man" and on the characteristic of "gender" aligns Jones, as Ikard argues, with patriarchy.
[288] One place where *Salt of the Earth*'s Communist influences comes through, however, may be in the "race question" and the "woman question" that the film tries to "answer."

words, only as good as the *best black person* and not as good as the *best white person*. Jones's adherence to these social limitations, which perpetuates the inherent racism in their assumptions, recalls the reinforcement of racial hierarchies in Packard's suggestion that blacks cannot move equally up the social ladder, and can only move vertically. As Jones sees it, "If you couldn't swing down Hollywood Boulevard and know that you belonged; if you couldn't make a polite pass at Lana Turner at Ciro's without having the gendarmes beat the black off you for getting out of your place; it you couldn't eat a thirty dollar dinner at a hotel without choking on the insults, being a great big 'Mister' nigger didn't mean a thing" (153). While the scenarios in the above quote suggest fitting in with the white elite, they also highlight the lack of ability that the black elite have of being socially equal with the white elite. Alice, Jones's girlfriend, comes from one of the wealthiest families in California, and she cannot eat in white restaurants without the affronts of prejudice. As Packard argues, the only chance for the black elite is to model themselves on whites. Jones, who feels he deserves access to these elite establishments partly because of Alice, cannot accept the social (rather than legal or economic) limitations to black equality. Like Viereck, Himes goes beyond the questions of legal equality and ponders what it will take to get, as Viereck puts it, "psychological equality."

Alice, however, tries to get Jones to see beyond these social and psychological limitations, which she says fall within the economic realm, and to find a place, like Esperanza in *Salt of the Earth*, where the prejudices of the world can be pushed out. Esperanza expresses her ability to see past the social and economic limitations placed

on her community when she says, “This is our home. The house is not ours. But the flowers … the flowers are ours” (2). Unlike the home which the company owns, Esperanza’s flowers offer dignity and empowerment. The flowers also connect Esperanza to the land[289] and distance her from the capitalist consumption that the social theorists feared would lead to mass think. Alice’s construction of the home is very similar to Esperanza’s as well as more explicit about how to maintain dignity in the face of social oppression and racism. Additionally, Alice seems more willing to compromise with the white power structure in order to achieve the safety of the home.

Alice and Jones meet for lunch toward the end of the novel and they express their mutual desire for marriage. In order for Alice to concede, however, she presents Jones with a compromise. She begins, “‘I must tell you again, Bob darling,’ she said. ‘You need some definite aim, a goal that you can attain within the segregated pattern in which we live’” (168). She justifies this concession to the segregated system by saying that blacks can control their destiny despite a racist society. Jones puts in, “‘I’ve already made up my mind to conform—so it isn’t that. But please don’t tell me I can control my destiny, because I know I can’t’” (168). For Jones, then, living under white racism is conformity, an act he feels betrays himself. But Alice is persistent. She admits that “in all the component parts of our existence that stem directly or indirectly from economy” blacks are hemmed in and governed by a racist system (169). “‘But, darling,’” she argues, “‘all of life is not commercial. The best parts of it are not commercial. Love and

[289] This could also be read as reinscribing the stereotype that places non-whites closer to the land and to “nature.”

marriage, children and homes. Those we control. Our physical beings, our personal integrity, our private property—we have as much protection for these as anyone. As long as we conform to the pattern of segregation we do not have to fear the seizure of our property or attack upon our persons" (169).[290] Here, Alice sounds willing to live in the social landscape that Whyte describes in the American suburbs – a place where one can feel welcomed by conformity but prohibited by race. She continues, "'And there are many other values that you are not taking into consideration—spiritual values, intrinsic values, which are also fundamental components of our lives. Honesty, decency, respectability" (169). She adds that everyone "is captain of their soul" and that this and the values one hold are more important that eating in fancy restaurants and living in fancy neighborhoods (169). In light of *Salt of the Earth*, Alice's compromise and conformity to the racial hierarchies in place could represent a spiritual and emotional separation from the racist system and an emphasis on personal values and experiences. Yet, by focusing on how the home itself can be transformative, she also participates in the very material (or, as she puts it, economic) culture that keeps blacks down – their conversation immediately turns to marriage, children, and homeownership. Unlike Esperanza, then, whose flowers separate her from the mental control of the company,

[290] In discussing Jones's disposition toward racism with Tom Leighton and her social worker friends, Alice says, "'Of course Bob's problem is more or less individual,' Alice apologized. 'He's really temperamentally unsuited for industrial work. As soon as he enters a profession his own problem will be solved" (88). This indicates her desire to avoid questions of communal rights or mass protest.

Alice, perhaps unselfconsciously, buys into the system, as Whyte, Viereck, and Packard describe it, that refuses her entrance.[291]

Alice offers Jones a possibility for life in lieu of dissent. She wants to enter the consensus culture of America without radically questioning why she, as a rich woman, is still barred form entry. She offers a giving-in so that they can hold on to each other as a bulwark against racist oppression. In this conversation, at least, Jones is convinced. He thinks, "No matter what the white folks did to me, or made me do just in order to live, Alice and I could have a life of our own, inside of all the pressure, away from it, separate from it, that no white person could ever touch" (169). He adds, "like the beginning of a new life […] I could take anything the white folks wanted to put on me, as long as I had this" (170).[292] Jones, at this point in the novel, is ready to make a good faith effort toward conformity in the hopes of releasing the pressures of racism through a happy home life.[293] In other words, Jones suggests, as Packard and Schlesinger both see as

---

[291] Alice's conformity to the system, however, is pictured by Himes as a perversion which manifests in her foray in lesbianism (which she gives up/explains away during the above conversation) and her passing as white with her white friends. While seemingly willing to adjust, Himes pictures her as, in fact, maladjusted herself. While I do not support the notion that homosexuality is a perversion, I suggest that Himes and his protagonist do. See also, Angus Calder, who writes, "Himes's subtle and moving presentation of Alice makes his point that compromise doesn't really solve anything very clear. Her brittle socialite poses mask a strain as constant as Bob's, and her Lesbian proclivities reflect the distortion wrought by this strain upon her personality" (112).

[292] Jones also thinks, "What I needed was to marry her, I thought. To settle down before they settled me—in San Quentin or some place. Then I got a strange yearning to have some children—two boys and two girls. I'd never thought seriously about children before, not about having any of my own; and now suddenly I wanted some, wanted the responsibility of raising them, supporting them, educating them; wanted to watch them grow" (163).

[293] MacDougal tells Jones, "'Tell you what I'll do with you, Bob. You go back up there and work under Tebbel for a while. Prove that you're dependable, trustworthy, that you can keep out of trouble. Take your punishment like a man, then make a comeback. That's the American way, my boy. Prove yourself" (174). Jones, considering this "American way," decides, "It'd be easier to quit, I thought. But the proof would be to stay on there and make a comeback" (177).

necessary and as Whyte sees as somewhat too capitulatory, that he is willing to believe in the system despite its shortcomings. Yet, just as this last statement mirrors the feelings Jones felt as he decided to rape Madge or kill Johnny Stodartt, the feelings don't last and the pressures of the white world immediately return upon his return to work. It is at this point in the novel when he accidentally ends up in a small room with Madge. In retaliation for his insults, she calls rape and gets Jones lynched, nearly fatally. Jones is taken into custody, escapes, and is caught again. While Madge drops the charges, he is forced into the military to avoid going to prison for a weapon possession charge. During his brief escape from custody, Jones asks Alice for help, but, remaining true to her compromise with the white world, she refuses. As Himes puts it, "'But I won't help you run away,' she cut in, getting her Americanism to working" (193). Her self-preservation, in other words, depends on her own upholding of the law and so the spiritual or emotional connection to Jones can only exist, for her, in a legal framework (the same one that, she admits, holds blacks back).

Despite briefly agreeing to try Alice's compromise, Jones has, through most of the novel, viewed such a compromise as traitorous. Himes writes, "So even though the solid logic of my hangover told me that Alice's way was my only out, I didn't have anything for it but the same contempt a white person has for a collaborator's out in France" (152). Alice's self-preservation, in other words, is seen as too big of a compromise, too big of a silence concerning unfair practices. But how, in the end, are we to read Jones's overall dissent and his subsequent entrance (forced or otherwise)

into the military? It could be said that Jones entertains being a "race traitor" to follow Alice's lead, but this outcome is quickly foiled by the violence of the Southern lynch law that manifested in the shipyard when the white woman cried rape.[294] At the same time, the president of the shipyard, Mr. Houghton, comes to talk to Jones just before he is sentenced. Mr. Houghton tells him, "'You were the first Negro to be employed in a position of responsibility by our corporation and you were in a position to represent your race, to win for them advantages heretofore denied. You were selected because you were considered the highest type of Negro" (202). According to this logic, Jones is also a "traitor to his race" because he expressed "animal lust," as Mr. Houghton puts it, for a white woman (202). Jones's inability to let the white woman's insult pass, in other words the core or impetus of his dissent, is characterized as harming his whole race.

Additionally, Jones characterizes himself as a traitor with his entrance into the army. As Ben had pointed out earlier, Jones could have chose prison. Instead, Jones is hauled off to prison alongside two Mexican youth. Himes writes,

> The two Mexican youths he had with him grinned a welcome. 'Let's go, man, the war's waiting,' one of them cracked. 'Don't rush the man,' the other one said. 'The man's not doing so well,' and when I came closer he said, 'Not doing well at all. Looks like this man has had a war. How you doing, man?' They were both

[294] Madge could be called a traitor, too, reasons Jones: "I knew the average overpatriotic American would have said a leaderman was justified in cursing out a white woman worker for refusing to do a job of work in a war industry in time of war—so long as the leaderman was white. Might have even called her a traitor and wanted her tried for sabotage" (152). As Stanley Orr writes, "Deeming Alive a Vichy traitor, Himes casts Jones as a Resistance fighter who operates 'behind the lines' to subvert enemy operations" (116).

> brown-skinned, about my colour, slender and slightly stooped, with Indian features and thick curly hair. Both wore bagged drapes that looked about to fall down from their waists, and grayish dirty T shirts. They talked in a melodious Mexican lilt. 'I'm still here,' I lisped painfully. They fell in beside me and we went out and started up the hill toward the induction centre, the three of us abreast and the cop in the rear. Two hours later I was in the Army. (203)

The war that Jones has been through, of course, was with the forces of white oppression.[295] In light of the power differential inherent in that war, Himes aligns the powerlessness of his protagonist with the powerlessness of the Mexican youth. Being taken to the recruiting station for forced conscription along with two Mexican Americans recalls the concerns Jones expresses at the beginning of the novel about the Japanese and Japanese Americans being hauled off without legal justification. At the same time, just as Pearl Harbor and the Zoot Suit riots have characterized Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans as "the enemy," so too has the novel show that Jones could also be "the enemy."[296] Despite this, all three racial groups, at once characterized as the enemy, are then asked to fight for their country. The contradiction

---

[295] As Stanley Orr puts it, "For Bob Jones, as for Chandler's Johnny Morrison, the 'home-front' is itself a combat zone that demands vigilance bordering on paranoia" (111).

[296] Himes edges Jones toward siding with the enemy when he writes, "I [Jones] thought of my second year at State when I subbed as end on the football team—the one game I played and the one touchdown I made and the people cheering. I had never felt so powerful, so strong, almost as if I'd become the hero I used to dream about being when I grew up. Then I thought about a motion picture called *A Guy Named Joe*; about that cat making that last bomb run, sinking a Nazi flat-top. Going out in a blaze of glory. See you, gates. See you, Jaxon. See you, stud … *In the bright blue forever*" (74). Then Jones thinks, "Just a simple nigger bastard, that was me. Never would be a hero. Had a thousand chances every day; a thousand coming up tomorrow. If I could just hang on to one and say, 'This is it!' And go out blowing up the white folks like that cat did to the Nazis" (74).

is not lost on Jones, who aligns his own experience with the justice system with those of Japanese and Mexican descent. Jones thinks, "The whole structure of American thought was against me; American tradition had convicted me a hundred years before. And standing there in an American courtroom, through all the phoney formality of an American trial, having to take it, knowing that I was innocent and that I didn't have a chance" (187). Thus, like the interned Japanese, the three men being carried off to the military represent the power of the American "justice" system over racial minorities and the system's ability to seize property and apprehend those that transgress (even as Jones's transgression remains mostly legal other than the weapon possession charge).

The military being an institution of conformity and American values, at the same time, the forced conscription, like the thought police in *1984*, mirrors a totalitarian regimentation to reinscribe American values into Jones, who seems to have lost them via his dissent of the racist system. His near lynching and induction into the military represent his inability to (re)integrate into society after voicing his dissent – as one critic puts it, "From the moment Madge opens her door to Bob, the novel begins its ineluctable descent into the specific tragedy associated with the presence of a black man and a white woman in an intimate space" (Brown 72). I would reform this to suggest that as soon as Jones will not accept being insulted by Madge on the job, his status on the job, with his girlfriend, and with the law becomes endangered. The push and pull of conformity that the novel has explored has also refused to show that (re)integration is a viable option for racial minorities willing to voice dissent and to

question the system. Jones breaks just enough laws to justify his conscription, but, despite having a weapon when the two police pull him over because he is black and in a white neighborhood, it seems his dissent would have been enough to keep him from the security of the home that he briefly envisions as a defense against racism. Finally, through his induction into the conformity-producing institution of the military, he becomes a race traitor by fighting for a democracy that is, clearly in the instance of his arrest, unjust and discriminatory. Yet, this is effectively what Schlesinger and others suggest – join in the spirit of democracy and gradually wait for change. The ruse is that while Schlesinger, Whyte, Viereck, and Packard value dissent and debate, they have little ability to envision how it would work for racial minorities. The novel, on the other hand, dramatizes the difficulty of dissent. While the totalitarian overtones may be counteracted by Jones' proclamation that "I'm still here," Jones is, nonetheless, in the army of the "enemy" two hours later.

Returning Home after Dissent: The Push and Pull in *No-No Boy*

John Okada's *No-No Boy* also employs a protagonist of a racial minority to voice dissent. Like Himes's, Okada's novel is characterized by anger, regret, violence, symbolic impotence, and fear.[297] In this case, Ichiro Yamada, the protagonist, has answered a double "no" to the loyalty questionnaire issued to Issei and Nisei while they were

[297] Stanley Orr has recently written about both Himes and Okada in *A Darkly Perfect World*. Orr, however, discusses the two authors in relation to the concept of "veteran's noir" (124).

interned by the U.S. government.[298] As Okada constructs it, the title "no-no boy" is a stigma in the postwar moment, especially to those of the Japanese American community that fought in the war or answered "yes-yes" to the loyalty questions. Okada's novel begins as Ichiro returns home to Seattle after serving two years in prison; he is immediately spit upon by a Japanese American that he used to know – a man who served in the army. Characteristic of Ichiro's feelings in his first days back in Seattle, Ichiro thinks, "The legs of his accuser were in front of him. God in a pair of green fatigues, US Army style. They were the legs of the jury that had passed sentence upon him. Beseech me, they seemed to say, throw your arms about me and bury your head between my knees and seek pardon for your great sin" (4). Indeed, Ichiro spends a large portion of the text grappling with his decision and his (re)integration back into society. Once home, Ichiro finds his parents running a small grocery story. His mother is delusional about the outcome of the war (she believes Japan has won), his father drinks too much, and his brother, Taro, plans to join the military as soon as he turns 18. The novel covers a short span of time, where Ichiro seems to be trying to fit back into a former life or find a new one despite the shame and guilt he feels for answering "no-no." Ichiro often blames his mother for his negative answers, and his mother is drawn as

[298] Nguyen writes, "In February 1943, Japanese Americans in concentration camps were asked to prove their loyalty by the federal government through responding to a questionnaire titled 'Application for Leave Clearance.' Question 27 read: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States, wherever ordered?' Question 28 read: 'Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any of all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power, or organization" (167). The questions were issued to both men and women – citizen and alien.

slowly going crazy until she commits suicide. Her death creates a feeling of freedom for Ichiro and his father, but her death does not set Ichiro free from his troubles with being a "no-no boy." Ichiro befriends some other "no-no boys," namely Freddie, but the true friend he finds is Kenji. Ichiro wishes to change places with Kenji, a Japanese American veteran who has had his leg amputated and still suffers from gangrene, whom Ichiro feels can at least face American and Japanese American society knowing that he belongs. Kenji introduces Ichiro to Emi, a woman who lives in the country and whose husband abandoned her by reenlisting in the military and not returning home, and with whom Ichiro has a brief affair. Ichiro looks for work, considers going back to school, but eventually decides to stay with his father for the time being.

Critical reception of *No-No Boy* has had a long history since the novel was first reprinted in 1976 and excerpted in *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* in 1974, and has been read in multiple, and often contradictory, ways. A recent critical work by Apollo Amoko suggests that "*No-No Boy* is an exemplary minority text; an allegory of attempted minority integration into the national body politic in the wake of violence and trauma." Another recent critic, Fu-jen Chen, offers this overview: "Critics and writers usually explore its political and historical tensions within a sociocultural context by focusing on the struggle between Japanese nationalism and assimilationism, generational conflicts between the Issei and the Nisei, dual identity in binary opposition,

and the desire for literary articulations in political and social constraints" (109).[299] Gary Storhoff, in 2004 writes, "The recent critical consensus on *No-No Boy* is that Okada, writing under the unconscious influence of American capitalism and Christianity, allows those cultural forms to shape the novel's narrative […] Ichiro, at novel's end, discovers that the benefits of American materialism offered to him should not be resisted" (2). Indeed, *No-No Boy* is marked by tension and critics often characterize this tension within a binary system like the ones mentioned above. Critics have also read the work as assimilationist and as anti-assimilationist; as optimistic about the future of people of Japanese descent in America and as appropriating racist white standards in the evaluation of the Japanese Americans. These judgments are often based on a psychological assessment of the protagonist in addition to a reading of the final scenes of the novel, where Okada, it could reasonably be argued, writes an ambiguous conclusion to Ichiro's internal and external struggles.

Most of the psychological readings of Ichiro characterize his actions as negative – full of guilt, blame, self-sacrifice and mother-hating. James Davis argues that the novel offers "A searing critique of the anti-Japanese racism that characterized U.S. culture in the early 1940s, [but] the novel nevertheless does not allow its protagonist to use this critique to assuage his own guilt" (56).[300] Daniel Kim suggests that Ichiro offers a

[299] Gayle K. Fujita Sato writes, "Critics and writers have observed in different ways that *No-No Boy* reflects the negative legacy of 'dual identity,' a conceptualization of 'Asian American' which divides 'Asian' and 'American' into separate spheres of existence" (239). Qun Wang, on the other hand, sees this duality as an expression of DuBoisian "double consciousness" (90).

[300] Katja Sarkowsky similarly argues that "Ichiro's passage through guilt is marked by a farewell to family; it seems as if family ties have to be broken in order to properly foster the ties to the nation.

misdirected model, which he relates to the "sentimental power" of American empire, "for how other racially minoritized subjects might channel their resentment at the racism to which they have been subjected into an abiding sense of national loyalty (80, 77). Jinqi Ling suggests that Ichiro "fails" to "piece together his fragmented past" and therefore reveals the "consequences of racism" and the internment in the postwar moment and also argues that Ichiro seeks "forgiveness" for his no-no status through "self-chastisement" ("Race" 360, 372). Shirley Lim accuses Ichiro of worrying "obsessively over his failure to prove himself an American" ("Not Waving" 38). She also calls his agonies over belonging a "narcissistic struggle" and says that he sees the attainment of "sacred" Americanness as teleological (i.e. that Ichiro sees full assimilation as inevitable) ("Not Waving" 42, 41).[301] Indeed, Wenying Xu says Ichiro is "held hostage by the ideology of assimilation" (54). Stan Yogi argues that the work "shatters the image of a docile <<model minority>> [sic] and instead depicts a bitterly divided Nikkei community, plagued with self-hatred and uncertainty in the immediate aftermath of World War II" (233).[302] Douglass Christopher takes it as far as to say that "*No-No Boy* imagines amalgamation as the possibly necessary step to the full cultural

---

Independence from the (ethnic) family is necessary for the protagonist's transition from shame to hope" (102).

[301] Dorothy McDonald argues that the text signals the idea that "time would be healing," but that this is "tinged with the ironic conviction that racism is here to stay" (20).

[302] William Yeh argues that "As a result of being jerked, drafted, or shaken, all the characters in the novel suffer from a 'shaken faith' in one form or another. This displacement causes Ichiro to reevaluate his status in American society" (122).

assimilation of racialized minorities"[303] and suggests that the novel posits "patriotism as the answer to Ichiro's citizenship problem" (142, 152). Several critics also read Ichiro's hateful relationship with his mother as an index of his desire to assimilate. As Bryn Gribben puts it, "Ichiro acts as if by separating from the person who most embodies Japanese identity for him, he can reinscribe himself as an 'American,' an identification denied to him as a 'no-no boy'" (32).[304] Jeanne Sokolowski, on the other hand, suggests that Okada limits the challenges in the book to those concerning masculine realms, such as military service and patriotism, and "At the same time, the novel treats female Japanese Americans as tools for personal growth, reifying their status as passive and maternal, paying little attention to their struggles to reframe citizenship" (70).[305]

Finally, Okada ends his novel in such a way that vexes critics, evidenced in their back and forth on whether or not the novel ends positively or negatively, with critique of or with acquiescence to the American dominant culture. Ling argues that Okada's resolution offers "a resolution that proves to be no solution at all" ("Race" 373). Amoko, on the other hand, reads the "inconclusive ending [as] illustrat[ing] Okada's reluctance to endorse the triumphal and progressivist pedagogical discourses of the American

---

[303] He adds, "What is so striking about Kenji's musings on the need to dissolve ethnic communities—and what has not yet been recognized in criticism on *No-No Boy*—is the extent to which they concord with the government policy of dispersing and resettling Japanese Americans away from the West Coast and into mostly white communities during and after the internment" (142).

[304] See also, Fu-jen Chen, pg. 112; Dorothy McDonald, pg. 21; Amoko Apollo; Wenying Xu, pg. 54-55; Gayle Sato, pg. 251-52; Dorothea Kehler, pg. 117; and Daniel Kim, who relates Ichiro's relationship to his mother to the Cold War concept of "momism" (see my chapter 3, where I discuss *Pocho*'s use of this gender construction).

[305] Suzanne Arakawa similarly argues "Although the bodies of Emi and Mrs. Yamada are crucial in *No-No Boy*, they ultimately exist as secondary catalysts and are situated as such overshadowed by the potency of the pervasive male-centered World War II narrative" (190).

nation." There are also those who see the ending more positively. Daniel Kim argues that "Having found in himself the ability to sympathize with and forgive someone [the 'yes-yes boy,' Bull] who had devoted much energy to terrorizing him, Ichiro feels 'A glimmer of hope' that he might be reintegrated into the America that had renounced him and that he had in turn renounced" (76). Stan Yogi also sees the novel's conclusion as "cautiously optimistic" and sees Ichiro in a process of healing (74). And Lawson Fusao Inada concludes that "in spite of the camps and prison, the death and destruction he experiences, Ichiro emerges as a positive person saying yes to life" and that Ichiro "embodies the soul and spirit of America" (264). This ambiguity, I will argue, is an intentional challenge to the seemingly clear cut subject positions offered to Americans in a Cold War context. The ambiguity also highlights the paradox inherent in the conformity/dissent model.

In situating *No-No Boy* in the 1950s ("Okada started writing *No-No Boy* in the early 1950s, and it was published in 1957" (Chen 110)), it is important to consider the place of dissent in the public sphere. Viet Thanh Nguyen points out that "In the 1950s, with the memory of the internment and the loyalty oath fresh in their minds, Japanese Americans witnessed the creation of a federal employee loyalty program, mandated through Truman's Executive Order 9835, where 13.5 million federal workers, or a total of 1 in 5 American workers, were subject to security checks by 1953; 4,756,705 were actually checked, and the FBI conducted 26,000 field investigations" (167). McCarthyism was at its peak in the early to mid 1950s, but at the same time people began to question

the Senator's tactics and HUACs ramrod attitude toward their victims. In Hollywood, for example, many actors, directors, and other film workers fell in line with HUACs questions and demands, but many others publicly questioned the committee and fought for free speech rights. The issue of the rightness or wrongness of "naming names," for example, was played out in Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954) and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953). Indeed, *On the Waterfront*, ostensibly a story of breaking mob control of a longshoreman's union, has been long viewed as Kazan's self-justification for complying with the committee by implicating others as members of the Communist party. Yet, like Schlesinger, Viereck, Packard, and Whyte, the film nonetheless upholds someone like Miller's right to refrain from naming names. When Terry (Marlon Brando) is approached by two men from the Waterfront Crime Commission to testify about witnessing the death of Joey Doyle, one of the men tells Terry, "you have every right not to talk if that's what you chose to do."[306] He also reminds Terry that "well, you can bring a lawyer if you wish; you're privileged under the constitution to protect yourself against questions which might implicate you in any crimes." Here we see a place for dissent within a democratic system, which is later strengthened when Edie (Eva Marie Saint), Terry's love interest and moral compass, tells her father that "I've seen things that I know are so wrong, now, how could I go back to school and keep my mind on things that are just in books, that aren't living people?" Thus, dissent is encouraged and keeping silent, in this case about mobs/Communists, while "legal" is the not the

[306] Quotes from *On the Waterfront* are from my own transcription of the film.

preferred form of dissent – which would be a dissent that would uphold democracy and challenge it's "enemies."

Several critics have connected the idea of loyalty and dissent in *No-No Boy* to the climate of repression they see in the early Cold War.[307] Yogi writes, that "Just as Japanese Americans were forced to answer either <<Yes>> or <<No>> [sic] to the loyalty questions during the war, the post-war community is presented with similar binary choices" (234).[308] Arakawa also argues that "In *No-No Boy*, Okada signifies freedom through the Japanese American who, despite pressures to assimilate, chooses to dissent. By the novel's end, however, the dissenter appears to desire a resolution wherein he shares a unified identity with other Americans" (183). Viet Thanh Nguyen, who perhaps best situates *No-No Boy* in the decade within which it was written and also ties Ichiro's "disloyalty" to the pervasive anti-Communism in the era and argues that "In *No-No Boy*, Ichiro, the 'disloyal' Japanese American who refuses to swear allegiance to the United States during World War II and is subsequently sent to prison, proves on his return that he is a 'true' American by conceding the importance of American wealth—houses, furnishings, cars, and businesses—which has been bestowed upon the 'loyal'

[307] Indeed, the following passage from the preface to the novel is reminiscent of the idea of "naming names": An old man, too old, too feeble, and too scared, was caught in the net. In his pocket was a little black book. He had been a collector for the Japan-Help-the-Poor-and-Starving-and-Flooded-Out-and-Homeless-and-Crippled-and-What-Have-You Fund. 'Yamada-san, 50 American cents; Okada-san, two American dollars; Watanabe-san, 24 American cents; Takizaki-san, skip this month because boy broke leg'; and so on down the page. Yamada-san, Okada-san, Watanabe-san, Takizaki-san, and so on down the page were whisked away from their homes while weeping families wept until the tears must surely have been wept dry, and then wept some more" (ix).

[308] Chen similarly contributes, "As Ichiro's family is torn by binary oppositions—American versus Japanese, yes-yes versus no-no—so the postwar community is wrenched by similarly polarized choices. It is a community full of self-abhorrence, guilt, agony, suicide, conflict, combustion, and hatred" (283-84).

Japanese Americans" (158-59). Thus, Nguyen argues that Ichiro's desires for the conformity found in the postwar demonstrates his incomplete dissent because, like Alice in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, he is willing to buy (literally) into the system that holds him down. Nguyen also argues that "America in *No-No Boy* is an ambivalent icon primarily because of its embodiment of the limits of pluralism, limits that are defined by the dissent that bears the name of disloyalty" (161) and adds that "the domestic Cold War environment of surveillance and countersubversion […] saw un-Americanness in every act of nonconformity and disloyalty in any un-American act" (162).[309] Nguyen suggests limits to the potential for dissent in postwar America, even as the Civil Rights movement had begun fighting and winning its most important battles.[310] Nguyen also fails to see the decade's seeming need to sanction dissent in order to avoid the charge of totalitarianism. The concept that dissent was impermissible (especially by racial minorities), however, is explored by Himes and Okada even as they level their dissent.

[309] Ling similarly argues that "Ichiro's problematic recovery in postwar Seattle—especially his thwarted struggle to articulate a Japanese American dissent in terms of ethnic pride—reflects both the limited range of dissent permitted in the social and aesthetic discourses surrounding Okada's literary creation and the contradictory state that such discourses create in Ichiro's consciousness, a state which prevents him from seeing and thinking about his plight outside the available social options" ("Race" 363). See also Douglass, pg. 153 and Sato, pg. 240-41.

[310] Nguyen continues in the idea that dissent was impermissible here: "His plight as a suspected traitor, and the consequences he suffers of exclusion, isolation, imprisonment, paranoia, and stigmatization, while a direct product of and reference to the internment camps, can also be read as an implicit commentary on the domestic Cold War. The lesson that the Japanese Americans learned foreshadows the lesson that the majority of American learned in the 1950s. This that being American demanded a submission to a society structured around a state of permanent war, with a commensurate internal security apparatus that operated not so much by visibility as by omnipresence. Thus, while Ichiro rejected the legitimacy of detention in the concentration camps, he eventually consents to the virtual panopticon of American identity" (169).

Thus, instead of being circumscribed by an oppressive culture of consent, they test the limits of dissent and critique its silencing.

No-No Boy works to make dissent permissible by validating Ichiro's refusal to serve in the military in addition to making dissent visible in the postwar atmosphere. Okada, like Himes, also questions the conformist tendencies of the era even as he shows their irresistible draw. When the U.S. government interned all of the Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast of the United States, the proclamation effectively linked descent and dissent and declared all Japanese people on the West Coast indistinguishable. As Okada puts it, "The Japanese who were born Americans and remained Japanese because biology does not know the meaning of patriotism no longer worried about whether they were Japanese-American or American-Japanese" (viii). In Okada's postwar novel, he demonstrates that all of the interned Japanese were *alien*ated and that this is still the case in the postwar moment. Ichiro has voiced his double "no" to the loyalty questionnaire, and, in so doing, he feels he has permanently marked himself (beyond his descent). While his regret for being a "no-no" boy is evident from the start (Ichiro he "felt like an intruder in a world to which he had no claim" (1)), his presence in postwar Seattle (conceivably he could have gone elsewhere) nonetheless draws attention to the reality of dissent, and reminds his Seattle community that they are not homogenously American or loyal. Indeed, Eto, the man who spits on him in the first few pages of the novel, easily uncovers Ichiro's refusal to serve or pledge loyalty to

the U.S. by a few simple questions about where he's been.[311] When Eto asks if Ichiro was a no-no boy, Okada writes, "Ichiro wanted to say yes. He wanted to return the look of despising hatred and say simply, yes, but it was too much to say" (3). In addition to learning that "'Nobody's got a right to spit on you'" (48) – which is what Freddie tells Ichiro after hearing the story – part of Ichiro's struggle throughout the novel is to voice this dissent as clearly on the outside as he did in the camps.

Ichiro's visibility as a "no-no boy" draws similar contempt as did his visibility as a Japanese during internment. In the preface to the novel, Okada writes about the news of the Pearl Harbor attack: "As of that moment, the Japanese in the United States became, by virtue of their ineradicable brownness and the slant eyes which, upon closer inspection, will seldom appear slanty, animals of a different breed" (vii). The supposed intractable difference that is bestowed on people of Japanese descent after the attacks here turns them into animals – beings without dignity or respect. In learning about the internment himself, Ichiro recognizes this ability to be turned out from the country you were reared in. He thinks, "when one is born in America and learning to love it more and more every day without thinking it, it is not an easy thing to discover suddenly that being American is a terribly incomplete thing if one's face is not white and one's parents are Japanese of the country Japan which attacked America" (54). In the small space of the novel that Okada devotes to Ichiro's actual internment experience, he focuses on a moment where Ichiro finds himself and other racial minorities pushed out of an

[311] Other degrading incidents include insults delivered by Bull in a bar and being tricked by his own brother out into an alley to get jumped.

American community. When Tommy, a man he knows in the camps, convinces Ichiro to go to church with him, Ichiro "sensed immediately that they were not welcome," and, in fact, at the bus stop, a man tells them "'One Jap is one too many. I told them: Two Japs today, maybe ten next Sunday. Don't come back'" (229, 230). The experience is a memorable one – to be turned out of a place of worship – but Ichiro goes back again, to a different church this time, with Tommy. There they are met with friendly conversation and dinner invitations. Okada writes, "Ichiro was delighted and Tommy was beaming" (230). But then one Sunday, Ichiro notices that the same congregation that welcomes them refuses to seat a black man. Ichiro is furious and will not go back. Tommy comes to talk about it with Ichiro: "'Holy cow!' he had exclaimed in a frantic cry, 'they like us. They treat us fine. We're in no position to stick out our necks when we've got enough troubles of our own'" (231-32). Tommy's refusal to protest the racism of the congregation denies dignity to the black man in the church. On the other hand, Ichiro's cross-racial sympathies indicate, like in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, an understanding that racism is the problem of all people of color.[312]

Despite being bullied by Bull, his brother, and others both during and after his internment experience, Ichiro still expresses desire to attain the "American" comforts of home and family.[313] Yet, Ichiro feels that his mother and her belief in a Japanese victory

---

[312] There are several other instances of Japanese-black sympathies expressed in the text as well as instances where Okada expresses the racism he sees between people of color. Freddie's black friend, Rabbit, for example, tells Ichiro and Freddie, "Good boy. If they had come for me, I would of told them where to shove the stinking uniform too" (238).

[313] Again, as many critics have pointed out, Ichiro's mother is pictured as no mother at all – within this gender dynamic, Ichiro's home does not match up the perceived American standards.

renders his home life with them un-American and unstable.[314] Despite Ichiro's feelings of exclusion from the American mainstream, like Jones, Ichiro longs for the dream American home life. Ichiro thinks, "In time, he thought, in time there will again be a place for me. I will buy a home and love my family and I will walk down the street holding my son's hand and people will stop and talk with us about the weather and the ball games and the elections" (52). Yet, stronger than his desire for a home is his feelings of exclusion from American life. Ichiro thinks, "the government was wise and strong enough to know why it was that I could not fight for America and did not strip me of my birthright. But it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half. I am not your son and I am not Japanese and I am not American" (16). Here, Okada describes a situation, as in Viereck, where legal equality or citizenship status do not transfer into psychological or social equality. Like Jones and the mining community in *Salt of the Earth*, Ichiro is concerned not as much with the legal freedoms that he poses, but with the sense of dignity and belongingness he attributes to his social life. Yet, unlike Jones and the miners, Ichiro's alienation is from both the American and the Japanese American communities. Dissent on the part of the racial minority, Okada stresses, rather than being celebrated as manly or needed in a democracy, proves to be a barrier to entry into the conforming mainstream.

[314] Ichiro blames his mother for his double "no" on the loyalty tests as well as for his inability to (re)integrate back into postwar society. Okada writes, "It was she who opened my mouth and made my lips move to sound the words. [...] She's killed me with her meanness and hatred and I hope she's happy because I'll never know the meaning of it again" (12).

Ichiro, however, often expresses a desire to retract his dissent. He thinks, "I do not understand what is was about that half that made me destroy the half of me which was American and the half which might have become the whole of me if I had said yes I will go and fight in your army because that is what I believe and want and cherish and love…" (16-17). This sentiment, expressed early in the text, can be read as disappointment with the fallout, in the form of social alienation and disrespect, from his dissent. At the same time, Ichiro's own reasons for what actually caused him to answer "no-no" are unclear. At one point Okada writes, "My reason was all the reasons put together. I did not go because I was weak and could not do what I should have done. It was not my mother, whom I have never really known. It was me, myself. It is done and there can be no excuse" (34). Here, Ichiro takes ownership for what he has done; just as earlier (and later) he blames his mother.[315] This failure to reveal Ichiro's reasoning places the audience in a unique position to accept Ichiro's reasons, out of sympathy for the protagonist, even without knowing what they were. At the same time, Okada offers other reasons and other justifications for refusing to accede to the loyalty oath, that despite Ichiro's uncertainty create a strong sense of dissent in the text.

In *No-No Boy* Okada provides a variety of possible responses to the internment and the loyalty questionnaire/draft order, which work to justify dissent as well as accent

[315] Ichiro wonders of his mother, "Was it she who was wrong and crazy not to have found in herself the capacity to accept a country which repeatedly refused to accept her or her sons unquestioningly, or was it the others who were being deluded, the ones, like Kenji, who believed and fought and gave their lives to protect this country where they could still not rate as first-class citizens because of the unseen walls?" (104).

in a pluralistic society. The most prominent place where he does this is in the preface to the novel, a preface that contains no characters later found in the text, but speaks to the various postures taken by the Japanese American community and the wider American community in response to Pearl Harbor, the internment, and the draft order. I have already mentioned the Japanese immigrant who was forced to "name names" of those who had given to his Japanese charity. The preface also includes the thoughts of Jewish man, Herman Fine, about the plight of the Japanese in America. Fine, hearing the news of the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor immediately predicts the racist hysteria and persecution that will follow. He thinks the Japanese "had taken their place beside the Jew" (viii). Not only do Fine's thoughts align the persecution of Jews and Japanese, but they also hint at the parallels between the Nazi concentration camps and the American internment camps. At the same time, given that Nazi persecution provides a justification for U.S. entry in the world war, internment provides justification for Japanese American refusal to fight. In another scenario in the preface, a Japanese solider tells a blond Nebraskan about the internment: "And then the Japanese American whose folks were still Japanese-Japanese, or else they would not be in a camp with barbed wire and watchtowers with soldiers holding rifles, told the blond giant from Nebraska about the removal of the Japanese from the Coast, which was called the evacuation, and about the concentration camps, which were called relocation centers" (x-xi). Here, in a passage highlighting Americans' ignorance of their own governments' policies (the Nebraskan asks the man to repeat the story before he believes it), this

speaker also points out the parallels between Nazi camps and American camps, suggesting that the American (re)naming of the camps "relocation centers" masks the truth of what they are.[316] After he hears the story, the Nebraskan voices his own dissent. He says, "'if they'd done that to me, I wouldn't be sitting in the belly of a broken-down B-24 going back to Guam from a reconnaissance mission to Japan,'" and adds, ''What the hell are we fighting for?'" (xi). The sequence between these men justifies dissent as it places it in the mouth of a "blond giant" from middle America – a soldier and someone who is supposed to be patriotic and anti-Japanese. Indeed, the Japanese American soldier not only does not explain his reasons for fighting, simply saying "I got reasons," but this conversation also causes him to reflect, not on patriotism or "proving himself," but on "his friend who was in another kind of uniform because they wouldn't let his father go to the same camp with his mother and sisters" (xi). The preface, coming before Ichiro's story, justifies both the yes-yes and no-no positions and does so through both Japanese Americans and other Americans. Highlighting the wrongness of the internment, the preface also serves to expose the confusion and hurt feelings it caused, which prompted a variety of responses.[317]

---

[316] Later in the novel, an unnamed internee thinks, "You can't make me go in the army because I'm not an American or you wouldn't have plucked me and mine from a life that was good and real and meaningful and fenced me in the desert like they do the Jews in Germany and its is a puzzle why you haven't started to liquidate us though you might as well since everything else has been destroyed" (31).

[317] Indeed, even Kenji, Ichiro's veteran friend, who is viewed as a hero, was not feeling wholly patriotic when he enlisted. Okada writes, "It was because he was Japanese and, at the same time, had to prove to the world that he was not Japanese that the turmoil was in his soul and urged him to enlist. There was confusion, but, underneath it, a conviction that he loved America and would fight and die for it because he did not wish to live anyplace else. And the father, also confused, understood what the son had not said and gave his consent. It was not a time for clear thinking because the sense

Okada also includes a section within the novel where Ichiro runs through the types of arguments that he heard internees give to the judge for their reasons to answer "no-no." The statements to the judge record the anger, desperation, and resignation of the speakers. One asks the judge if it is just to have interned the hundred thousand Japanese and Japanese Americans and asks why they didn't throw the Italians and Germans into camps: "Take away their homes and cars and beer and spaghetti and throw them in a camp and what do you think they'll say when you try to draft them into your army of the country that is for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" (31-32). Another asks the judge how much money he is making off of the internment and suggests, "All this bull about us being security risks and saboteurs and Shinto freaks, that's for the birds and the dumbheads. The only way it figures is the money angle" (32-33). While the first points out the racist dimensions of the internment, the second points out the economic benefits of racism. Still another is shown as pleading to the judge:

> I've always lived here and I was all-city guard and one time I wrote an essay for composition about what it meant to me to be an American and the teacher sent it into a contest and they gave me twenty-five dollars, which proves that I'm a good American. Maybe I look Japanese and my father and mother and brothers and sisters look Japanese, but we're better Americans than the regular ones

---

of loyalty had become dispersed and the shaken faith of an American interned in an American concentration camp was indeed a flimsy thing. So, on this steadfast conviction that remained, and knowing not what the future held, this son had gone to war to prove that he deserved to enjoy those rights which should rightfully have been his" (121).

> because that's the way it has to be when one looks Japanese but is really a good America. We're not like the other Japanese who aren't good American like us. We're more like you and the other, regular Americans. (33)

The speaker only asks that his family be given back their property and then they'll pass as Chinese. Like Himes's "Little Riki Oyana singing 'God Bless America,'" this example exhibits that displays of patriotism, and an explicit tolerance of anti-Japanese racism generally, do not exonerate one from the country's condemnation – even as Whyte and other suggest that a belief in the system is necessary if the system is to work. At the same time, as Packard suggests that African Americans do, the speakers clearly lays out the fact that his family has had to be over-American to prove their Americanness. This indicates that "regular," i.e. white, Americans define the standard of what Americanism is regardless of its pluralistic ideal. The testaments to the judge recorded here are recollected by Ichiro, thus, some of the anger, resentment, confusion, and internalized racism may be a reflection of his own views. The testimonies also provide further justification for a refusal to fight for a country that imprisons its citizens, as Himes says, "Without a trial. Without a charge." At the same time, the silence of the judge in this sequence indicates Japanese Americans could and did voice their dissent, it just was not answered.

Okada also uses outsiders to not only justify Ichiro's dissent, but also to show the positions taken on the issue. Kenji, for example, tells Ichiro, "'Don't blame yourself. […] Blame the world, the Japs, the Germans. But not yourself. You're killing yourself'" (72).

When Ichiro goes to a former professor, they discuss the fairness of the internment order. Professor Baxter Brown tells Ichiro that because there were "'Families uprooted, businesses smashed, educations interrupted. You've got a right to be sore'" (55). But he also says "You fellows are as American as I am. And you've proved it. That outfit in Italy. Greatest there ever was. You were there too, I suppose?'" (55-56). The professor's logic, therefore, backs up the idea, present throughout *No-No Boy* and *Go for Broke!*, that patriotism is a proper response to oppression. Yet given the silent and ineffectual professor in Okada's preface (who cannot look his Japanese American student in the face after Pearl Harbor[318]), Dr. Brown is reminiscent of the acquiescence of college deans and professors to their own loyalty oaths and anti-Communist campaigns. His position therefore runs counter to the concept of the university as tolerant and left-leaning. Emi, Ichiro's love interest, offers a similar plan and one that mirrors the sentiments of Whyte, Packard and Viereck. She suggests that Ichiro remember that "In any other country they would have shot you for what you did" and also tells him to try and feel patriotic like in grade school singing the Star Spangled Banner, "so big that the bigness seems to want to bust out, and then you'll understand why it is that your mistake was no bigger than the mistake your country made" (96).[319] Finally she tells him to "Try, if you can, to be equally big and forgive them and be grateful to them and prove

[318] Okada writes, "The college professor, finding it suddenly impossible to meet squarely the gaze of his polite, serious, but now too Japanese star pupil, coughed on his pipe and assured the lad that things were a mess. Conviction lacking, he failed at his attempt to be worldly and assuring" (vii).
[319] This is reminiscent of Jones feeling the patriotism of the war production (after he decides to kill Johnny Stoddart).

to them that you can be an American worthy of the frailties of the country as well as its strengths" (96). While her advice endorses the belief in the healing possibilities of patriotism, she takes one step beyond the professor in that she validates Ichiro's dissent by saying that he and the U.S. were equally at fault. In a move that mirrors the tactics of the miners in *Salt of the Earth*, Emi reminds Ichiro that, unlike her brother-in-law Mike, he did not agitate against the government in the camps, and therefore Ichiro is not an enemy. By avoiding violence, in other words, both stay above the charge of illegality. She tells him, "All you did was refuse to go in the army and you did so for a reason no worse than that held by a conscientious objector who wasn't a conscientious objector" (99). Emi thus stresses the legality and historical antecedents of Ichiro's dissent, which serves to justify it and show its precedent.

Finally, Ichiro finds full acceptance and justification through a potential employer, Mr. Carrick. Hearing that Ichiro is a "no-no boy," Mr. Carrick still wants to give him a job (and even offers him more than he had intended to offer). Mr. Carrick says:

> The government made a big mistake when they shoved you people around. There was no reason for it. A big black mark in the annals of American history. I mean that. I've always been a big-mouthed, loud-talking, back-slapping American but, when that happened, I lost a little of my wind. I don't feel as proud as I used to, but, if the mistake has been made, maybe we've learned something from it. Let's hope so. We can still be the best damn nation in the world. I'm sorry things worked out the way they did. (150)

The unabashed acceptance by a white male business owner seems to set Ichiro free. Ichiro thinks:

> There was someone who cared. Surely there were others too who understood the suffering of the small and the weak and, yes, even the seemingly treasonous, and offered a way back into the great compassionate stream of life that is America. [… H]e glimpsed the real nature of the country against which he had almost fully turned his back, and saw that its mistake was no less unforgivable than his own. (153-4)

That it takes white approval for Ichiro to feel like he might have a place in America is problematic, but it nonetheless shows the allure of adhering to conformity culture. However, the scene does not ask for Ichiro's patriotism in return for some transgression (read: being of Japanese descent and voicing dissent). Mr. Carrick, instead, wants the U.S. to change, wants it to repent its misdeeds. There is some sense that this is white guilt on the part of Mr. Carrick. Okada writes, "Ichiro knew that the job did not belong to him, but to another Japanese who was equally as American as this man who was attempting in a small way to rectify the wrong he felt to be his own because he was a part of the country which, somehow, had erred in a moment of panic" (151). Mr. Carrick, as a white man and in opposition to Ichiro, can register his dissent and still be considered a representative America. Given the logic of the narrative, one that always seems to be moving toward acceptance and peace, Mr. Carrick and his job offer would seem to be the answer that Ichiro is looking for. Yet, instead, Ichiro turns the job down.

Okada writes, “It was an apology, a sincere apology from a man who had money and position and respectability, made to the Japanese who had been wronged. But it was not an apology to Ichiro and he did not know how to answer this man who might have been a friend and employer” (150). Ichiro, unexpectedly, refuses all avenues that might lead to a sense of belonging or consensus culture.

At the beginning of the novel, Okada indicates that Ichiro feels alienated from what he sees as the American home (the center of consensus culture): “It was the way he felt, stripped of dignity, respect, purpose, honor, all the things which added up to schooling and marriage and family and work and happiness” (12). He also believes that military service will yield the material comforts of the American home: “For each and every refusal based on sundry reasons, another thousand chose to fight for the right to continue to be Americans because homes and cars and money could be regained but only if they first regained their rights as citizens, and that was everything” (34). Ichiro’s longing for an in to consensus culture is dramatized in his desire to switch places with Kenji, a man who has lost a limb and is dying, and who is a veteran with a happy home life. Okada writes, “Ichiro looked out at the houses, the big, roomy houses of brick and glass which belonged in magazines and were of that world which was no longer his to dream about. Kenji could still hope. A leg more or less wasn’t important when compared with himself, Ichiro, who was strong and perfect but only an empty shell. He would have given both legs to change places with Kenji” (60). As many critics have noted, Kenji’s home is both materially and culturally “American,” and because of this, Ichiro’s envy is

viewed as an assimilationist drive. Yet, by novel's end, Ichiro questions his own sense of the American ideal and consensus culture. Ichiro wonders, "Where is that place they talk of and paint nice pictures of and describe in all the homey magazines? Where is that place with the clean, white cottages surrounding the new, red-brick church with clean, white steeple, where the families all have two children, one boy and one girl, and a shiny new car in the garage and a dog and a cat and life is like living in the land of the happily-ever-after?" (159). And he answers himself:

> Maybe the answer is that there is no in. Maybe the whole damned country is pushing and shoving and screaming to get into someplace that doesn't exist, because they don't know that the outside could be the inside if only they would stop all this pushing and shoving and screaming, and they haven't got enough sense to realize that. That makes sense. I've got the answer all figured out, simple and neat and sensible (159-60).

With these realizations, I argue, Ichiro abandons the assimilationist drive that critics so often read into the novel and realizes the falsity of the consensus culture that surrounds him.

Once Ichiro has realized the validity – with the help Mr. Carrick, Gary [another no-no boy],[320] and Emi – of his dissent and the injustice of the American system that the

[320] Indeed, it is Gary who finally demystifies that idea that patriotism will result in inclusion. Gary says, Gary: "They'll find that they still can't buy a house on Broadmoor even with a million stones in the bank. They'll see themselves getting passed up for jobs by white fellows not quite so bright but white. They'll take a trip up to some resort, thinking this is God's green land of democracy for which I killed a dozen Krauts, and get kicked in the face with the unfortunate mistake about the reservation

home represents, he can go on to question the feeling of belongingness that is so central to his discontent and to his idea of American home life. In a telling scene with Kenji, Kenji reveals that his feelings of home do not match up with the ideal American home that Ichiro thought Kenji's home represented. Kenji, thinking about the Club Oriental, a local bar, says, "It's like a home away from home only more precious because one expects home to be like that. Not many places a Jap can go to and feel so completely at ease. It must be nice to be white and American and to be able to feel like this no matter where one goes to, but I won't cry about that. There's been a war and, suddenly, things are better for the Japs and the Chinks and—" (133). Kenji's admission of his own feelings of envy toward white America devalues Kenji's home life, suggesting that he too feels like an outsider. Immediately after these lines are spoken, a black man is refused entrance to the Club Oriental.[321] As Okada represents it here, the sense of home of white America is based on the logic of racial exclusion, much like Whyte's description of the "classless" American suburb, and the ability to feel belonging, while tempting and inviting, has immediate consequences for another racial minority. In Ichiro's final vision, however, he wants America to live up to its pluralist vision, "There was room for all kinds of people. Possibly, even for one like him" (233).

---

story because he'd signed the letter Ohara and the guy at the resort thought it was good old Irish O'Hara" (227).

[321] The novel then describes an ideal of cross-racial sympathies ("One hears the voice of the Negro or Japanese or Chinese or Jew, a clear and bell-like intonation of the common struggle for recognition as a complete human being and there is a sense of unity and purpose which inspires one to hope and optimism" [134]), and follows this with a number of scenarios where members of one racial or ethnic group are practicing racism toward or exclusion of another.

Okada, through multiple voices and perspectives, has proved that Ichiro is not a traitor – he notes that Ichiro has served his time, has felt guilt for rejecting his homeland, and he has shown that Ichiro's refusal to serve is understandable and even valiant. Okada has shown, as well, how racism in American works to alienate racial others from a sense of centeredness, but has shown, as well, that even those, like Mr. Carrick, who should be "in" are on the outside too. When Freddie, Ichiro's "no-no boy" friend dies while fleeing a fight with Bull, the final scene of the novel, Okada writes:

> Ichiro felt deeply sorry for his friend who, in his hatred of the complex jungle of unreasoning that had twisted a lift-giving yes into an empty no, blindly sought relief in total, hateful rejection of self and family and society. And this sorrow, painfully and humanely felt, enlarged still more the understanding which he had begun to find through Ken[ji] and Mr. Carrick and Emi and, yes, even his mother and father. (241-42)

The "life-giving yes" represent Freddie's (and Ichiro's) initial feelings toward the United States, but it was the "complex jungle of unreasoning" by the United States that twisted it into an "empty no." The no is empty, hollow, silent because it is not voiced in the streets and as a united protest. Yet, Ichiro has lost his guilt and regret at his own "no," suggesting the possibility to air the grievances of internment. Ichiro has also come to understand his own parents and they him, something critics often do not give the text credit for. Because Ichiro finally settles to work in the grocery with his father, the text aligns Ichiro with his own family (however flawed) and does not force him into an

alliance with the capitalist materialism of the ideal American home. There are no marriage plans, no job opportunities, and no kids and white picket fences. As Floyd Cheung and Bill E. Peterson point out, in the final scene, "it is noteworthy that Ichiro still does not join the Japanese American community gathering to bear witness to Freddie's death. Instead, Ichiro walks away from the crowd of yes-yes boys. He remains an outsider" (206). Like Himes, Okada refuses to enlist his protagonist as a secondary member of the ranks of white America that oppress those whom they press into service.

The Limits of Dissent: Conclusions

While these works make dissent a tenable endeavor – even if sometimes, as in Himes, one's priorities get turned upside down, or, as in Okada, one feels regret because of where that dissent has left them – as works in the public market, they nonetheless mark the untenable nature of dissent by racial minorities. As I have shown above, *Salt of the Earth* was unable to get its message out due to the pressures and power of the anti-Communist network. Thus, as Balthaser suggests, the trade off that the film made to delete its Communist message in favor of a racial tolerance message, nonetheless failed to garner acceptance for the film. *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, while faring a little better, also experienced its own kind of censorship. Angus Calder tells us that "According to Himes, it was shaping up as a best-seller but the publishers wouldn't meet the demand by reprinting. In view of his book's dominantly proletarian character and its bracing refusal to be optimistic about the race situation, this is not surprising" (110). And Margolies and Fabre note that "On the whole, the reviews were favorable,

though not ecstatic—leaving Himes disappointed" (56).[322] Boris also adds that "*If He Hollers* experienced an unofficial censorship when a white woman secretary at Doubleday stopped the print run out of disgust with the work as it was surging to best-seller status" (5). According to these critics, then, Himes's first novel was stymied not due to bad press, but due to the nature and content of the novel. In apparent retaliation for the novel's poor success on the market, Fred Pfeil tells us:

> To begin with, Himes proclaimed that his 'negro novelist' and indeed all American blacks were *Americans*: 'the face may be the face of Africa, but the heart has the beat of Wall Street.' He next insisted that, given white racism, all American blacks 'must, of necessity, hate white people … at some time … [There] are no exceptions. It could not possibly be otherwise.' And finally, he argued that any honest exploration of the condition of the black American psyche would have to admit to and describe the damage at its core. (37-38)[323]

Indeed, as much of Himes's literary work after *If He Hollers* can attest to, Himes remained angry and expressed feelings of dispossession in regards to America. As Lee writes, "Since 1953, when he first shipped for France, he had stayed mainly abroad,

[322] Robert Lee adds that "usually in company with Ann Petry, he had to suffer being called a dull shadow of Wright, part of a school serving up formulaic black protest" (100).
[323] Seniments like these apparently aroused the interest of the FBI, who have a file on Himes. See Sallis, pg. 78 and Margolies and Fabre, pg. 77.

exiled, expatriated, in flight from, and to hear his version of things, violently at war with, the American culture he eventually called 'the prison of my mind'" (103).[324]

No-No Boy shared a similar fate in the public market, potentially behind why this is Okada's only published and surviving work. As Chen tells us "When first published in 1957, *No-No Boy* was not only neglected by the general American public, but also unwelcome in the Japanese American community. Its first edition of 1,500 copies had not sold out when John Okada died in obscurity in 1971," and adds that "even the author's own family" did not accept the work (109, 115). Ling reminds us that "Okada died in oblivion in 1971" and argues that Japanese Americans ignored the book because they were "troubled by its subject matter and its project of critiquing racial discrimination against Japanese Americans" ("Race" 359). Ling adds that "A more important reason for Japanese American's silence about *No-No Boy* in the immediate postwar era was the dominance, both in the majority society and within the ethnic community, of the new stereotype of Nisei as 'loyal' Americans as a result of the wide publicity given to the heroic wartime exploits of Nisei soldiers" ("*No-No*" 141).[325] Thus, even as Okada tried to draw visibility to dissent in Japanese American experience,

[324] As Josh Lukin writes, "Himes was no Betty Fridedan: the deformations his work underwent [...] sought not to accommodate fifties pressures but to attack them head-on, with predictable results for the mainstream reception of his novel" (xxi).

[325] Naoki Sakai adds that "In *No-No Boy* the fictive nature of its narrative consists in the retrospective alternative hypothesis: what would I have done if I had been able to respond to the historical conditions otherwise than I actually did? Understandably the majority of the Japanese-American community in the United States were hostile to this publication and accordingly ignored it, perceiving in this fiction an insult to their loyalty and national belonging which they had managed to internalize according to the scenario of national integration by a imperial nationalism" (255).

Japanese Americans themselves are said to act as a silencing force in regards to disloyalty.

As Samuel Stouffer's study of American opinion in *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* tells us, a person "whose loyalty has been criticized by a Congressional investigating committee but who swears under oath he is not a Communist" nonetheless often meets "rank and file who would withdraw [from him] such privileges" as giving public speeches, teaching, or having his book in a public library. Thus, even as *Salt of the Earth* chose to scale back the Communism that the filmmakers and the union supported, it was nonetheless accused on Communism and race baiting on the floor of Congress. Similarly, Bob Jones did not need to be guilty for the police to pick him up or for Madge to get him raped. All that was needed was the accusation. Finally, Ichiro, having served his time and remaining a U.S. citizen, nonetheless found it difficult to shake the stigma of attached to his double "no" to the loyalty questionnaire. What these works make evident is that fighting for racial equality through dissent is as volatile if not more so than the charge of Communism or Communist sympathies.

All three of these texts explore the relationship between justifiable dissent in regards to racial discrimination and the prospects for becoming part of the conformity culture that dominated the era. While each levels a critique of the systems of white supremacy as they are expressed in legal, economic, social, and psychological terms, all three fall short of a complete rejection of democracy. Nonetheless, the protagonists in Himes and Okada remain outside of the mainstream domestic ideal. In *Salt of the Earth*,

this is the seeming reward for the communities struggles with a repressive company. In Himes, just as the protagonist is willing to swallow his rage and resentment in order to attempt to find this domestic reward, racism conspires to prevent this and he is hauled off to fight for a country he cannot believe in. Finally, in Okada, the protagonist finally figures out the nature of conformity culture by realizing that it is façade and that even whites can feel alienated from it, and so decides to remain aloof from the trappings of that culture – marriage, children, economic security – and instead stay with his father at the grocery. These works participate in the liberal tolerance agenda, but level a critique that is far more direct than in the previous works in this project.

Conclusion: Film, Literature, and Politics of the Early Cold War

This project has traced multiple strands of social and political thought through multiple texts. The period from the start of World War II and into the late 1950s and beyond is one marked by the liberal tolerance agenda.[326] The liberal tolerance agenda approved of gains in race relations through legal means, gradualism, and individual-by-individual. As I have discussed throughout this project, the liberal tolerance agenda suggested that racial minorities could affect positive change by altering their beliefs, behaviors, and actions to more readily align with white norms and expectations. This agenda wanted racial tolerance (or the prospect of it) to be foregrounded in American political posturing so that the U.S. could avoid the charge of being racist despite its democratic and egalitarian principles. As Dudziak has aptly proven in *Cold War Civil Rights*, domestic anti-racism was tied to global anti-Communism in an intimate fashion. Similarly, Josh Lukin writes,

> Presenting itself as a warm, friendly place capable of vast sympathy and eager to give developing nations a helping hand, the U.S. fostered a discourse of sentimental affiliation at least as powerful as its aggressive and fearful anticommunism. Cold War ideology was buttressed not only by fear but by the alluring promise of transcending difference to connect emotionally with free peoples at home and abroad. (xvii)

[326] In his *The Color of Freedom*, David Carroll Cochran describes this era's liberalism as "color-blind liberalism," arguing that "Color-blind liberalism's moral vision is of an integrated society where differences between black and white Americans have as little significance as those between Irish and Polish Americans today" (18).

Again, racial tolerance was of vital importance in this era, and Lukin shows with the emotional and intimate language he uses to describe the U.S. mission to promote the ideal of racial equality to a global audience.

My study picks up on this intimacy in the literatures of racial minorities in this period. I argue not only that the authors explore the liberal tolerance agenda in their works, but also that they take up the, perhaps unintentional, boundaries and gray areas that are found at the limits of that agenda. How, for example, is the racial subject supposed to gradually pursue racial equality, when they cannot hold a job that affords them a safe place to live? How can they succeed when they are asked to divest themselves of resentment and yet find themselves dually segregated by the process of assimilation? How, finally, can they believe that the system truly allows for dissent by racial minorities when dissenters cannot find a homeplace in the fabric of the American landscape? This project has drawn together American film, politics, and social history to create a picture of the liberal tolerance agenda and then showed how it has played out in the texts of racial minorities.

In David Caute's 2010 *Politics and the Novel During the Cold War*, Caute announces that "in these pages I set out to examine how politically engaged novelists of the Cold War era, Western and Soviet, conveyed their understanding of recent and contemporary history through works of fiction" (1). Caute lengthens the typical periodization of the Cold War to include the period following the Bolshevik revolution and lists authors such as Heinrich Mann, Brecht, Malraux, Orwell, Hemmingway, Dos

Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Steinbeck, Sartre, and Camus (1-2). He writes that "In the United States and Western Europe, the 'political' novel, the urgent, morally committed depiction of recent tragedies and disasters, flourished spontaneously in the 1930s and 1940s, the crisis years of economic depression, fascism, the Spanish Civil War, the rise of Stalinism, and the Second World War" (1). He then describes, as does Thomas Schaub in *American Fiction in the Cold War*, a period where it was more difficult to write politics into fiction due to the repressive atmospheres on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Schaub's reading shows how critics and fiction writers conformed to the ideas of the liberal center. Schaub writes,

> The pervasive pressure for a new tone of acceptance and affirmation of American culture—an aspect of the postwar euphoria as well as a consequence or requirement of the cold war—was exerted by the academic and popular audience alike, but the popular audience especially … had little patience with novelists who didn't confirm their idea of the American reality. (58)

Caute concludes that "Political passion returned to the Western novel with the break-up of the Cold War consensus. The Vietnam War and the eruption of the New Left worldwide released new political energies among creative writers" (5).

Caute's study, like much literary scholarship of the Cold War, demonstrates a willful neglect of the connections between American foreign policy and domestic practice in regards to race and racial equality. Despite the fact that Richard Wright's work, for example, embodies the confluences of depression-era thinking, the lure of

Communism in the United States, and the presence of racial protest on a global stage, Caute's study never touches on his work. In fact, Wright and Chester Himes were American writers who were intimately connected to the political culture in Paris that Caute identifies.[327] Yet Caute, like many Cold War literary scholars, disarticulates the movement for racial equality from the political landscape of America. The move is shocking in scholarship as recent as Caute's. Just as David Halberstam's *The Fifties* suggests that African Americans and other racial minorities in America were not invited into the conformity culture as represented in the suburban ideal, so too does Caute suggest that racial minorities were not part of the American Cold War political climate. My work, on the other hand, tries to reestablish the connections that were clearly present between civil rights, the Cold War, and the American capitalist and domestic ideal. My project has shown that racial minorities across subject positions have weaved their stories into the political, social, and cultural fabric of the nation during the early Cold War.

The post-World War II era was seminal in shaping global and national politics. Not only did the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union define the shape of world politics for half of a century, but it also realigned nations and caused bloody ideological and economic conflicts across the globe. Some of the conflicts continue today in Korea, Afghanistan, and Libya, among other places. America's ability to define itself as a racially tolerant nation solidified its ability to achieve global

[327] See James Campbell's *Paris Interzone*.

hegemony in the postwar era, a time that saw the death of colonialism and the birth of neocolonialist aims in addition to the births of newly independent nations across Asia and African, and eventually across Central and South America. As Von Eschen writes, between 1945 and 1960, "forty countries with a total of eight hundred million people—more than a quarter of the world's population at the time—revolted against colonialism and won their independence" (qtd. in Lukin xvii). This massive and mass phenomenon constitutes a major shift if world politics and governance, far larger, perhaps, than the Cold War and its repercussions. Culminating in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, or the Bandung Conference, this global power shift bespeaks an awareness on the part of peoples of color that their struggles are tied to other struggles against white oppression the world over.

Chester Himes and Américo Paredes bring into focus the neocolonialist aims of U.S. hegemony as well as the alliance of peoples of color by focusing on how U.S. industries and the U.S. military exploit its own labor pool for economic, territory, and militaristic gains. By partly aligning his novel with the histories of *Los sediciosos* through Feliciano's participation in their uprising, for example, Paredes calls together the grievances of border Mexicans along with other racial minorities in America. As José David Saldívar explains, *Los sediciosos* were a group of resistance fighters who rose up against the U.S. Calvary and the Texas Rangers around 1915. He writes, "Inspired by the 'Plan de San Diego' manifesto, this document called for a coalition of Mexicans with (Amer)Indians, blacks, and Asians, and the utopian creation of a Spanish-speaking

republic in the Southwest" ("Américo" 296). By bringing these sentiments to life in the mid-20th Century through George's daydreams, Paredes makes relevant the imperialist history of the U.S. as it is on the verge of another global conflict: WWII. Additionally, by sympathizing with the grievances of a multiethnic Republic of the Southwest, Paredes highlights the broad range of victims of U.S. white supremacy even as U.S. schools teach his protagonist about equality, liberty, and democracy.

Chester Himes also reveals the multiethnic dimensions of his critique, and in so doing also offers a critique of U.S. imperialism during World War II. Jodi Kim, in her seminal work *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*, reveals how Asian American cultural texts "trace, uncover, and interrogate U.S. Cold War imperialism as the violent conditions of possibility for why it is that Asian Americans are here in the first place" (12). Indeed, in asking why blacks, Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, and Southern whites are "here" in Los Angeles in Himes's novel, we must ask how the legacies of Jim Crow and the slave economy, the Bracero Program and the Zoot Suit Riots, the importation of Japanese labor and the Internment, as well as the second World War and its labor demands draw these groups together. Himes's novel reveals how U.S. economic and military need has brought these groups together and that freedom can be stripped from one, or perhaps all, disadvantaged groups at any time. Jones's Los Angeles reveals a palimpsest of U.S. domestic and foreign policies coming to head in the racial and ethnic mixing that characterizes the war industries and the city at large. Thus, these novels wage a complex critique of U.S. global policy. This critique is

only made stronger by the presence of racism and white supremacy on the American homefront during a war for democracy and the Four Freedoms.

The communist menace was also a major force on the home front during the Cold War years. Saddled with loyalty questionnaires created by the Truman administration for government employees but used at random throughout the United States, Americans were asked to be at a level of heightened awareness, alert to the Communists that might be their next-door neighbor. As many scholars will argue, plenty of Americans were far removed from this state of anxiety. Peter Filene writes, "the Cold War was fought primarily at an elite level. It pervaded and shaped the experience of ordinary Americans far less than historians would have us believe. Although government leaders, social-science experts, and media commentators set the terms of public discourse—and also of public policy—most citizens to a surprising degree defined their world in personal terms" (157). Yet, the era nonetheless was one of repression and fear – not just a fear that a communist might live next door, but that you too (or your family), somehow, could be implicated in un-American activity. Alan Brinkley, for example, writes that:

> The official and unofficial repression of political belief, the pervasive fear among intellectuals and others of being accused of radical sympathies, the ideological fervor that the rivalry with the Soviet Union produced: all had a powerful effect on the way Americans thought about themselves and their culture and on what they dared to do, say, and even think. It would be hard to overstate the degree

> to which the ideology and rhetoric of the Cold War shaped the public discourse of the time, hard to exaggerate the pervasiveness of its influence and the oppressiveness of its demands. (62)

Brinkley and Filene provide a varied take on the personal implications of the Cold War in the lives of average Americans, yet both attest to the pervasive political climate of fear that very easily could have entered the minds, homes, and hearts of susceptible Americans.

John Okada's *No-No Boy* reveals how closely linked the general atmosphere of repression and fear was to the experiences of the loyalty questionnaires from an internee's experience. In other words, Okada not only show how the loyalty questionnaires of the Truman administration and the loyalty questionnaires of the camps are linked, but reveals that they are of the same cloth. Indeed, the 1955 *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* by Samuel Stouffer investigated how Americans thought about the threat of Communism from within and without as well as what they thought about the curtailment of civil liberties in order to protect Americans from espionage and infiltration.[328] The work asks, anticipating Okada's comparison of Japanese American no-no boys and suspected communists, "How are the images about Communists which people carry in their heads related to willingness to deprive other nonconformists, who are not necessarily Communists, of civil rights?" (14). The study

[328] The survey questioned a total of 4933 people from a "probability method" pool of people from a cross-section of the nation, and the surveys were conducted by Gallup and the National Opinion Research Center (15-17).

also surmises that “some alarmed citizens feel that the country cannot risk the luxury of full civil liberties for nonconformists” (14). Finally, one relevant finding that the study produced suggests that “only 5% in the national cross-section thought it possible for a man to believe in Communism and still be a loyal American” (39). These fears, which Stouffer admits are latent and not at the forefront of people’s minds, exemplify the type of treatment suspected Communists received from a public that wanted them exposed. Ichiro, Okada’s protagonist, goes through similar feelings of exposure, and must grapple with the paradox that a nation that spent centuries building up civil liberties and civil rights would abandon them with a mere suspicion of ill intent. Reading the context of the practices of the anti-Communist network without the antecedent of the Internment loyalty questionnaires, reduces the historical specificity of the Cold War’s origins and treats the Cold War as an originary era of repression, rather than a continuance of U.S. suspicion and repression of its own citizens.

The war years and the early Cold War also mark a defining era of Hollywood cinema. It saw the birth of cinematic noir, it occasioned the intimacy between Hollywood filmmakers and the U.S. government, and it articulated the communist menace in horror films, creature features, and science fiction. Many of these films helped create the image of the consensus culture associated with this era. Alan Nadel tells us, for example, that:

> cultural narratives suggested the limits of possibility. These narratives naturalized policies by drawing on a matrix of tropes that comprehended foreign

> affairs and domestic security through the media of personal performance as it pertained to the quotidian life of a gendered, mating, religious, consuming subject of prosperous middle-class America at its most economically and politically expansionist moment. (297)

In other words, film helped define the norms by which Americans judged themselves. Films defined and classified aberrant as well as "normal" behavior and punished transgressors within the confines of their plots. Few film scholars are able to continue to read film from this era without, as Douglas Field writes, "overlooking the impact of race, homosexuality and feminist cultures" (7). Thus, while much of the characterization of Cold War literature is still "presented as white, male and monolithic," film scholarship has recognized the defining place of race and gender in the Cold War period (7).

Additionally, the Cold War marks a moment where the first mainstream films to question white supremacy were produced and distributed on a national scale. These films set the tone for Hollywood's response to the civil rights turmoil rocking the nation into the 1960s and beyond. Films like Staley Kramer's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and Norman Jewison's *In the Heat of the Night*, both released in 1967 and both starring Sidney Poitier, are outgrowths of the liberal tolerance messages encapsulated in those early race problem films from 1949. This trajectory shows a continued adherence on the part of Hollywood filmmakers to a vision of racial integration that relies on a faultless, ambitious, and good-tempered individual proving that not all blacks (or Others) are bad. These are themes explored and rejected by works like Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*

and Ann Petry's *The Street*, where the authors point out that faultlessness and a belief in the system is not enough for the racial subject in America to overcome systems of white oppression whose influence and powers are vast. In other words, while the charge is leveled at both Petry and Sone that their protagonists (and sometimes that their texts) are assimilationist and therefore dated, the presence of these works in the early parts of the civil rights struggle actually date Hollywood's liberal tolerance response to civil rights nearly two decades later.

Another aspect of the early postwar years that has a continuing impact in the U.S. was the postwar baby boom. Characteristic of the reinvestment in strict gender roles for men and women, the baby boom itself attested to feeling of security and safety in the home, signified by the growth of capitalism and the vast expansion of the suburbs. As major cities across the U.S. experienced "white flight," their infrastructures crumbled due to lack of economic investment and were rocked by riots in the mid 1940s and then again in the mid 1960s. While suburban expansion afforded the space for the 1950s ideal home, the (now racial) inner city demonstrated the how decades of inequality continued in housing and employment. The ideal, as May reminds us, was nonetheless wide-spread. The novels of John Okada and José Antonio Villarreal demonstrate how this ideal held sway with the racial minority in the postwar years, but they also reveal how untenable these gender roles are when they are not backed by a shared culture or a share in a slice of the American economic pie. All of the works in this project reveal that the majority American experience was both untenable and

unattainable for the racial minority in America. How these racial minorities characterized the baby boom proves relevant to this day as it became the locus of the birth of (white) feminism, the anti-war movement, and other student and free speech movements. My project suggests that racial minorities already recognized the strictures of the ideal home long before its offspring ever could.

In other words, the authors in this project, while many of them are accused of accommodating their ideals to those of the mainstream, are engaged in a much more complex negotiation within the political, cultural, and social fabric of the nation. Additionally, while these works can be classified as focusing on race issues, my project shows that race issues are inextricably tied into the major foreign and domestic trends characteristic of the Cold War era. And these authors knew it. Each author reflects on how World War II influences the local geographies of race in America. In this way, each author ties the local to the national and to the global. At the same time, civil rights is one of the most defining features of the 20th Century. Rippling out from Gandhi's nonviolent victory in India, mass movements for independence, civil rights, and freedom grew up in Africa, the United States, and Asia. The authors in this study mark a moment of negotiation with the promises of American justice, equality, and democracy and the structures of oppression, discrimination, and violence that form a gulf between the lived reality and the ideal.

Spanning an era from 1945 to 1959, the literary texts that I study in this project are not proto-Civil Rights texts, they are Civil Rights texts. As Lukin puts it, "Far from

being in their infancy, a number of 'sixties' movements and ideas entered the fifties fully grown, or at least past the toddler stage" (xi-x). Many students and scholars erroneously label the 1960s as the decade when civil rights workers were being beaten, arrested, and murdered, however many of the movements that have come to characterize the Civil Rights movement – the bus boycotts, the sit-ins, and nonviolent protest – began in the era just after World War II. It is no wonder, as I have argued, that new life was put into the possibility for success given the gains made under the Roosevelt and Truman administrations and given the prominence of the liberal tolerance agenda in both Hollywood and Washington. Yet, as many scholars cited in this study have pointed out, the radicalism and racial tolerance movements of the 1930s were tempered in the aftermath of the war. But they did not disappear. As Lukin, and this study at large, asks, "in an era where older modes of resistance were discredited, stigmatized, or destroyed, how did marginalized groups try to salvage or reconceptualize their struggles for rights and recognition? […H]ow did literature work as a critique, a reflection, or an anticipation of those struggles?" (xix). This study has addressed the ways in which literature by racial minorities negotiated with the newly formed tolerance agenda and has revealed how they have rejected, accommodated to, and questioned the possibilities for success under this model.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso, 1979. Print.

Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers. Eds. Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong. Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974. Print.

"All Classes Fighting Rent Inequalities." *People's Voice* 24 October 1942: 30. Microform.

Amoko, Apollo. "Resilient ImagiNations: *No-No Boy*, *Obasan* and the Limits of Minority Discourse." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 33.3 (2000): n.p. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 19 January 2011. Web.

Arakawa, Suzanne. "Suffering Male Bodies: Representations of Dissent and Displacement in the Internment Themed Narratives of John Okada and Toshio Mori." *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature*. Ed. Keith Lawrence and Floyd Cheung. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005. 183-206. Print.

Balthaser, Benjamin. "Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen *Salt of the Earth*." *American Quarterly* 60.2 (2008): 347-371. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 27 Jan 11. Web.

Bell, Bernard W. "Ann Petry's Demythologizing of American Culture and Afro-

American Character." *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*. Ed. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. 105-115. Print.

Bell, Daniel. *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960. Print.

Bendiner, Robert. "What Kind of Liberal Are You?: Classifications of the Species." *Commentary* 8 (1949) 238-42. Print.

Berman, William C. *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970. Print.

Bernstein, David and Adele. "Washington: Tarnished Symbol: Our Capital's Treason Against America." *Commentary* 6 (1948) 397-403. Print.

Biberman, Herbert. *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965. Print.

"Biography for Carl Foreman." *Internet Move Database.* IMDB.com, Inc. n.d. Web. 22 Mar 2011.

Bloom, Davida. "White, But Not Quite: The Jewish Character and Anti-Semitism Negotiating a Location in the Gray Zone Between Other and Not." *The Journal of Religion and Theatre* 1 (Fall 2002) 2-18. Print.

Body and Soul. Dir. Robert Rossen. Perf. John Garfield, Lilli Palmer, Ann Revere, and Canada Lee. United Artists, 1947. DVD.

Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History*

of Blacks in American Films. New York: The Viking Press, 1973. Print.

Bohn, Thomas W. *An Historical and Descriptive Analysis of the 'Why We Fight' Series*. New York: Arno Press, 1977. Print.

Boris, Eileen. "'Arm and Arm': Racialized Bodies and Colored Lines." *Journal of American Studies* 35 (2001): 1-20. *MLA International Bibliography*. University of Texas at Austin. 12 Dec 2010. Web.

Braker, Milton. "Negroes' Courage Upheld in Inquiry." *New York Times (1923-Current file)* 15 March 1945: 12. ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times* (1851-2007). Web. 15 Dec 2010.

"'Brave' Important Drama; 'Street' Bold Social Study; Grim Entertainment" in *The Hollywood Reporter* Friday, April 29, 1949. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Breu, Christopher. "Freudian Knot or Gordian Knot?: The Contradictions of Racialized Masculinity in Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. *Callaloo* 26.3 (2003): 766-95. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 20 Dec 2010. Web.

Brinkley, Alan. "The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture." *Rethinking Cold War Culture*. Eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert. Washington: Smithsonian, 2001. Print.

Broe, Dennis. "On the (Santa Monica) Waterfront: Screening Labor in 1950s

Hollywood." *Film & History CD-ROM Annual* 2003: 1-17. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. PDF.

"Brooklyn Offers Riot Antidote: Freedom Rally Outlines Program for Democracy." *People's Voice* 14 August 1943: 6. Microform.

Brown, John Masa. "Seeing Things: Land of the Free." *The Saturday Review* 11 June 1949. 26. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Brown, Stephanie. "Anybody's Protest Novel: Chester Himes and the Prison of Authenticity." *Invisible Suburbs: Recovering Protest Fiction in the 1950s United States*." Ed. Josh Lukin. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008. 62-84. Print.

Calder, Angus. "Chester Himes and the Art of Fiction." *The Several Lives of Chester Himes*. Eds. Edward Margolies and Michel Fabre. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. 101-116. Print.

Cameron, Kate. "'Home of the Brave' Raises Race Question." No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Campbell, James. *Paris Interzone: Richard Wright, Lolita, Boris Vian and Others on the Left Bank, 1946-60*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1994. Print.

Cantú, Roberto. "Jose Antonio Villarreal." *Chicano Literature: A Reference Guide*.

Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985. 420-432. Print.

Carby, Hazel V. "Figuring the Future in Los(t) Angeles." *Reading without Maps?: Cultural Landmarks in a Post-Canonical Age*. Brussels: Presses Interuniversitaires Européennes, 2005. Ed. Christophe Den Tandt. 255-271. Print.

Carroll, Patrick J. *Felix Longoria's Wake: Bereavement, Racism, and The Rise of Mexican American Activism*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003. Print.

Caute, David. *Politics and the Novel During the Cold War*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010. Print.

Ceplair, Larry. "The Many 50th Anniversaries of *Salt of the Earth*." *Cineaste: America's Leading Magazine on the Art and Politics of Cinema* 29.2 (2004): 8-9. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 28 Jan 11. PDF.

---. *The Marxist and the Movies: A Biography of Paul Jarrico*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007. Print.

Champion, Laurie and Bruce A. Glasrud. "Texas as a Foil: Racism in Chester Himes' 1940s Writings." *Southwestern American Literature* 27.1 (2001): 9-19. *Academic OneFile*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 23 Dec 2010.

Charles, John. "The Home and the Street: The Dialectics of Racial Privacy in Ann Petry's Early Career" Ed. Alex Lubin. *Revising the Blue Print: Ann Petry and the Literary Left*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 97-119. Print.

Chase, Cida S. "Américo Paredes." *Dictionary of Literary Biography Volume 209:*

Chicano Writers, Third Series. *The Gale Group*. The University of Texas at Austin Libraries. 1999. Web. 26 Mar 2011.

Chen, Fu-jen. "A Lacanian Reading of *No-No Boy* and *Obasan*: Traumatic *Thing* and Transformation into Subjects of Jouissance." *The Comparatist* 31 (2007): 105-129. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 12 Jan 2011. PDF.

Cheung, Floyd and Bill E. Peterson. "Psychology and Asian American Literature: Application of the Life-Story Model of Identity to *No-No Boy*." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 6.2 (2006): 191-214. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 14 Jan 2011. PDF.

Citron, Alice. "Some Harlem Needs Outlined." *New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Nov 12, 1941; ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The New York Times* (1851-2006). Pg. 22. (In "Letters to the Times"). The University of Texas at Austin. 04 Apr 2009. Web.

The City-Wide Citizens' Committee on Harlem. Advertisement. *People's Voice* 07 August 1943. Microform.

"Civil Service News." *People's Voice* 07 November 1942: 6. Microform.

Clark, Keith. "A Distaff Dream Deferred?: Ann Petry and the Art of Subversion." *African American Review* 26 (1992): 495-505. Print.

Clurman, Richard M. "Training Film for Democrats." *Commentary* 8 (1949) 181-183. Print.

Cochran, David Carroll. *The Color of Freedom: Race and Contemporary American Liberalism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999. Print.

Coe, Richard L. "'Home of the Brave' Courageous Film." *The Washington Post* 5 Aug. 1949: 24. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 25 Apr. 2009.

Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003. Print.

"Concert Benefits Tenant Organization." *People's Voice* 17 October 1942: 17. Microform.

Crescenzo, Michele. "Poor Lutie's Almanac: Reading and Social Critique in Ann Petry's *The Street*." *Reading Women: Literary Figures and Cultural Icons from the Victorian Age to the Present*. Ed. Janet Badia and Jennifer Phegley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. 215-235. Print.

Cripps, Thomas. *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.

Crowther, Bosley. "'Home of the Brave' at Victoria, and 'The Stratton Story,' at Music Hall, Well Rated." *New York Times* 13 May 1949: 29. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 25 Apr. 2009.

Culbert, David. "'Why We Fight': Social Engineering for a Democratic Society at War." *Film & Radio Propaganda in World War II*. Ed. K.R.M. Short. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983. Print.

Curtis, Constance H. “Lily White ‘Walled City.’” *The Crisis* July 1943, (206, 222). Microform.

Dash, Thomas R. “Victoria Theater – Film.” *Women’s Wear Daily*, Thursday. No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Davidson, Michael. *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2004. Print.

Davis, Amanda J. "Shatterings: Violent Disruptions of Homeplace in Jubilee and *The Street.*" *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 30.4 (2005): 25-51. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

Davis, James. “Ichiro is a Punk, and Other Lessons from Teaching ‘The Immigrant Experience.’” *Radical Teacher: A Socialist, Feminist and Anti-Racist Journal on the Theory and Practice of Teaching (RaTe)* 84 (2009): 50-61. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Jan 2011.

“Democracy at Work in A New York War Plant.” *People’s Voice* 03 July 1943: 13. Microform.

Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Hollywood’s Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Print.

Douglass, Christopher. *A Genealogy of Literary Multiculturalism*. Ithaca: Cornell

University Press, 2009. Print.

Driver McBride, Kecia. "Fear, Consumption, and Desire: Naturalism and Ann Petry's *The Street*." *Twisted From the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Knoxville: U of Tennessee Press, 2003. 304-322. Print.

Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000. Print.

"Either 'Tom' or be Radical Powell Says and Raises Roof." *People's Voice* 03 April 1943: 8. Microform.

Ellison, Ralph. "Shadow and Act." *Shadow and Act*. New York: Random House, 1953. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008 (1952). 1-13. Print.

Field, Douglas. "Introduction." *American Cold War Culture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. Print.

Filene, Peter. "'Cold War Culture' Doesn't Say it All." *Rethinking Cold War Culture*. Eds. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001. 156-174. Print.

Fitzsimmons, Lorna. "The Socially 'Forsaken Race': Dantean Turns in Ann Petry's *The Street*." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 30.2 (2000): 6-8. *MLA International Bibliography.* The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 27 Sep 2008.

Flamming, Douglas. “Becoming Democrats: Liberal Politics and the African American Community in Los Angeles, 1930-1965.” *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans inCalifornia*. Ed. Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Qukntard Taylor. 279-308. Print.

“Fort Clark, Texas … Cavalrymen of the New All-Negro Second Calvary Division at Work with their Horses and Equipment.” *People’s Voice* 03 July 1943: 8. Microform.

Friedmann, F.G. “America: A Country Without Pre-History.” *Partisan Review* 19 (2) (1952) 141-52. Print.

García, Mario T. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Print.

Garrett, Greg. “It’s Everybody’s War: Racism and the World War Two Documentary.” *Journal of Film and Television* 22.2 (1994): n.p. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 04 Apr 2009.

Garvey, Johanna X. K. "That Old Black Magic? Gender and Music in Ann Petry's Fiction." *Black Orpheus: Music in African American Fiction from the Harlem Renaissance to Toni Morrison*. 119-151. New York, NY: Garland, 2000. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

“G.I. Bill History.” *United States Department of Veterans Affairs*. www.gibill.va.gov. 6 Nov 2009. Web. 24 Apr 2011.

G.L. "*Home of the Brave*." *Monthly Film Review* 16 (1949): 193. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers.* The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 07 Aug 2009.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Courthouse Ring: Atticus Finch and the Limits of Southern Liberalism." *The New Yorker*. The New Yorker, 10 Aug. 2009. Web. 22 Sep. 2009.

"God Bless Our Boys in the Service of Our Country." *People's Voice* 28 November 1942: 23. Microform.

Go for Broke! Dir. Robert Pirosh. Perf. Van Johnson, Lane Nakano, and Henry Nakamura. MGM, 1953. DVD.

González, John Morán. *Border Renaissance: The Texas Centennial and the Emergence of Mexican American Literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. Print.

Grafton, Samuel. "Stuff from Life." No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Gribben, Bryn. "The Mother that Won't Reflect Back: Situating Psychoanalysis and the Japanese Mother in *No-No Boy*." *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 28.2 (2003): 31-46. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 20 Jan 2011. PDF.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. Dir. Stanley Kramer. Perf. Sidney Poitier, Spencer Tracy, and Katherine Hepburn. Turner Classic Movies. 1967. DVD.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Fawcett Books, 1993. Print.

Handlin, Oscar. "Group Life Within the American Pattern: Its Scope and Its Limits." *Commentary* 8 (1949) 411-17. Print.

---. "New Paths in American Jewish History: Afterthoughts on a Conference." *Commentary* 7 (1949) 388-94. Print.

Hartz, Louis. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. Austin: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Inc.: 1955. Print.

Henderson, Carol E. "The 'Walking Wounded': Rethinking Black Women's Identity in Ann Petry's *The Street*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (2000): 849-67. Print.

"Here's Your Chance: Defense Job Training is Brought to Harlem." *People's Voice* 5 December 1942: 1. Microform.

Hernández-Guttierez, Manuel de Jesus. "Villarreal's *Clemente Chacon* (1984): A Precursor's Accomodationist Dialogue." *The Bilingual Review* 16.1 Jan-Apr 1991, 35-43. Print.

Himes, Chester. *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1986 (1945). Print.

"Hi-Ya Soldier!" *People's Voice* 13 January 1945: 37. Microform.

Hoffman, Warren D. "Home, Memory, and Narrative in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*." *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature*. Ed. Keith Lawrence and Floyd Cheung. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005. 229-248. Print.

Hofstadter, Richard. "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt." *The New American Right*. Ed. Daniel Bell. New York: Criterion Books, 1955. 33-55. Print.

Home of the Brave. Advertisement. *The New York Times*. 2 May 1949: 5. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers.* The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 04 Apr 2009.

Home of the Brave. Dir. Mark Robson. Perf. James Edwards, Jeff Corey, and Lloyd Bridges. NTA Home Entertainment, 1949. Video cassette.

Hook, Sidney. "Reflections on the Jewish Question." *Partisan Review* 16 (5) (1949) 463-82. Print.

Howard, John. *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

Howe, Quncy and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Eds. *Guide to Politics 1954*. New York: The Dial Press, 1954. Print.

Humphries, Reynold. *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2008. Print.

Ikard, David. "Love Jones: A Black Male Feminist Critique of Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go*." *African American Review* 36.2 (2002): n.p. *MLA International Bibliography*. University of Texas at Austin. 21 Dec 2010. Web.

Inada, Lawson Fusao. "Of Place and Displacement: The Range of Japanese-American Literature." *Three American Literatures: Essays in Chicano, Native American, and Asian-American Literature for Teachers of American Literature*. Ed. Houston A.

Baker, Jr. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1982. 254-265. Print.

International Fur and Leather Workers Union of the United States and Canada, CIO, Joint Board of Fur Dressers and Dryers, Furriers Joint Council. "Uncover and Punish the Fascist Gang! Unite to Win the War!" *People's Voice* 03 July 1943: 25. Microform.

In the Heat of the Night. Dir. Norman Jewison. Perf. Sidney Poitier and Rod Steiger. Mirishch Corporation. 1967. DVD.

Japanese Relocation. Prod. Office of War Information and the Bureau of Motion Pictures. United States Government. 1942. DVD.

Jerrico, Paul and Herbert J. Biberman. "Breaking Ground." *Salt of the Earth*. *California Quarterly* 2.4 (1953). 60-63 Print.

"The Job of Being a WAC." *People's Voice* 21 August 1943: 8. Microform.

Johns, Meredith. "'Home of the Brave' Is Brave Venture for Movie Makers: Powerful New Film." *The Chicago Defender* 30 Apr 1949, 16. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*.Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Johnson, David K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Print.

Jones, Christopher. "Image and Ideology in Kazan's *Pinky*." *Literature and Film Quarterly* 9 (1981): 110-20. Print.

Kehler, Dorothea. “Shakespeare, Okada, Kingston: The First Generation.” *Comparatist: Journal of the Southern Comparative Literature Association* 22 (1998): 110-22. Print.

Kim, Jodi. *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

Kim, Daniel Y. “Once More, with Feeling: Cold War Masculinity and the Sentiment of Patriotism in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*.” *Criticism* 47.1 (2005): 65-83. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 13 Jan 2011. PDF.

Kindermann, Wolf D. “Asian-American Literary Perception of the United States: 1930-1940s.” *The Future of American Modernism: Ethnic Writing Between the Wars*. Ed. William Boelhower. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990. 243-272. Print.

Kramer, Stanley with Thomas M. Coffey. *A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World: A Life in Hollywood*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997. Print.

Kydd, Elspeth. “‘The Ineffaceable Curse of Cain’: Racial Marking and Embodiment in *Pinky*.” *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*. 2000 Jan, 15 (43[1]): 95-121. Web.

Lattin, Vernon E. “Ann Petry and the American Dream.” *Black American Literature Forum* 12 (1978): 69-72. Print.

Laurents, Arthur. “Define ‘Lie.’” Message to the author. 08 Jul. 2009. E-mail.

---. *Home of the Brave*. New York: Random House, 1946. Print.

---. *Original Story By: A Memoir of Broadway and Hollywood*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. Print.

Leab, Daniel J. *From Sambo to Superspade: The Black Experience in Motion Pictures.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975. Print.

Lee, A. Robert. "Hurts, Absurdities and Violence: The Contrary Dimensions of Chester Himes." *Journal of American Studies* 12 (1978): 99-114. *MLA International Biliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 21 Dec 2010.

Leff, Leonard J. *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001. Print.

Leonard, Kevin Allen. "'In the Interest of All Races': African Americans and Interracial Cooperation in Los Angeles during and after World War II." *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*. Ed. Lawrence B. De Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Qukntard Taylor. 309-340. Print.

Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternality in Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. *Feminist Studies* 16 (2) (1990) 289-312. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 24 Jun 2010.

---. "Not Waving but Drowning: Creativity and Identity in Diaspora Writing." *Diaspora, Identity, and Language Community: Special Issue of Studies in Linguistic Sciences* 31.1 (2001): 31-47. Urbana-Champaign: Department of Linguistics, 2001. Print.

Ling, Jinqi. "*No-No Boy* by John Okada." *A Resource Guide to Asian American Literature*. Ed. Sau-ling Cynthia Wong and Stephen H. Sumida. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2001. 140-150. Print.

---. "Race, Power, and Cultural Politics in John Okada's *No-No Boy*." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 67.2 (1995): 359-81. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 18 Jan 2011. PDF.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. "The Sources of the 'Radical Right'." *The New American Right*. Ed. Daniel Bell. New York: Criterion Books, 1955. 166-233. Print.

Lipsitz, George. *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994. Print.

Liston, Maureen. "Chester Himes: 'A Nigger'." *The Several Lives of Chester Himes*. Eds. Edward Margolies and Michel Fabre. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. 83-92. Print.

"Local Landlords Join to Block Rent Cuts." *People's Voice* 28 November 1942: 4. Microform.

Lorence, James J. *The Supressoin of* Salt of the Earth*: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1999. Print.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. Print.

Lubin, Alex, ed. “Introduction.” *Revising the Blue Print: Ann Petry and the Literary Left*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 3-14. Print.

Lucy, Robin. “Fables of the Reconstruction: Black Women on the Domestic Front in Ann Petry's World War II Fiction.” *CLA Journal* (*CLAJ*) 2005 Sept; 49 (1): 1-27. Print.

Luedtke, Luther S. “Pocho and the American Dream.” *Minority Voices: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature and the Arts* 1.2 (1977): 1-16. Print.

Lukin, Josh. “Introduction: Thirty-Three Years of the Fifties.” *Invisible Suburbs: Recovering Protest Fiction in the 1950s United States*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. ix-xxiv. Print.

Margolies, Edward and Michel Fabre. *The Several Lives of Chester Himes*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997. Print.

Markowitz, Norman D. *The Rise and Fall of the People’s Century: Henry A. Wallace And American Liberalism, 1941-1948*. New York: Free Press, 1973. Print.

May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. 20th Anniversary Ed. New York: Basic Books, 2008. Print.

McCann, Sean. *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. Print.

McCarthy, Patrick. “*Salt of the Earth*: Convention and Invention of the Domestic Melodrama.” *Rendezvous: Journal of Arts and Letters* 19.1 (1983): 22-32. Print.

McDonald, Dorothy Ritsuko. “After Imprisonment: Ichiro’s Search for Redemption in *No-No Boy*.” *MELUS* 6.3 (1979): 19-26. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Jan 2011.

McGehee, Margaret T. “Disturbing the Peace: *Lost Boundaries*, *Pinky*, and Censorship in Atlanta Georgia, 1949-1952.” *Cinema Journal* 2006 Fall; 46 (1): 23-51. *MLA International Bibliography.* The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 24 Jun 2009.

McKay, Nellie Y. “Ann Petry’s *The Street* and *The Narrows* A Study of the Influence of Class, Race, and Gender on Afro-American Women’s Lives.” *Women and War: The Changing Status of American Woman from the 1930s to the 1950s*. Eds. Maria Diedrich and Dorothea Fisher-Hornung. New York: Berg, 1990. 127-140. Print.

Meléndez, A. Gabriel. “Who Are the ‘Salt of the Earth’? Competing Images of Mexican Americans in *Salt of the Earth* and *And Now, Miguel*.” *Expressing New Mexico: Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual, and Memory*. Ed. Phillip B. Gonzales. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007. 115-138. Print.

“Memorandum: Prepared by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Concerning the Present Discriminatory Policies of the Federal Housing Administration” October 28, 1944, Part 5, Reel 5, 000555-000567 (1-13). Microform.

Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003 (1953). Print.

Miller, Tom. “Class Reunion: *Salt of the Earth* Revisited.” *Cineaste: America’s Leading*

Magazine on the Art and Politics of the Cinema 13.3 (1984): 31-36. Print.

Milliken, Stephen F. *Chester Himes: A Critical Appraisal*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976. Print.

Morris, Peter. "*Salt of the Earth*." *Celluloid Power: Social Film Criticism from* The Birth of a Nation *to* Judgment at Nuremberg. Ed. David Platt. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1992. 485-493. Print.

Mortimer, Lee. "The Movies: 'Home of the Brave' Exciting, Absorbing Drama." No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

"Movie of the Week: *Home of the Brave*: An Outspoken Film is First to Break Hollywood's Taboo against Treating the Negro Problem in America." *Life* 143-146. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

"Mrs. Bethune Speaks Here." *People's Voice* 03 July 1943: 2. Microform.

Muir, Florabel. *Variety* 27 April 1949. No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Mullen, Bill V. "Object Lessons: Fetishization and Class Consciousness in Ann Petry's *The Street.*" *Revising the Blue Print: Ann Petry and the Literary Left*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 35-48. Print.

Murray, Florence. “Helping to Win the War for Democracy: On the Home Front.” *People’s Voice* 19 May 1945: 16. Microform.

---. “Helping to Win the War for Democracy: On the War Front.” *People’s Voice* 19 May 1945: 14-15. Microform.

Myers, Inma Minoves. “Language and Style in *Pocho*.” *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue* 1991 May-Dec 16 (2-3): n.p. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 16 Sep 2010.

“My God … My People: To Our Boys in Uniform.” *People’s Voice* 03 July 1943: 28. Microform.

Nadel, Alan. *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Print.

“Negroes Finding More War Jobs.” *People’s Voice* 17 October 1942: 24. Microform.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Print.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. “Wounded Bodies and the Cold War: Freedom, Materialism, and Revolution in Asian American Literature, 1946-1957.” *Recovered Legacies: Authority and Identity in Early Asian American Literature*. Ed. Keith Lawrence and Floyd Cheung. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005. 158-182. Print.

Nickel, John. “Disabling African American Men: Liberalism and Race Message Films.” *Cinema Journal* 44 (Autumn 2004) 25-48. Print.

“1943 Will See War Jobs Open for Negro Women Workers.” *People’s Voice* 02

January 1943: 8. Microform.

Nishie, Joy. "'Breaking' Hollywood's Stereotype of the Japanese American: The Significance of the Film *Go for Broke!*" *Popular Culture Review* 11.2 (2000): 17-28. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 15 Jun 2010.

Odum, Howard W. *Race and Rumors of Race: Challenge to American Crisis*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1943. Print.

Okada, John. *No-No Boy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976 (1957). Print.

On the Waterfront. Dir. Elia Kazan. Perf. Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Rod Steiger, Karl Malden and Lee Cobb. Columbia Pictures, 1954. DVD.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. Print.

"OPA Establishes Office in Harlem." *New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Aug 7, 1943; *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times* (1851-2006) pg 13. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 24 Sep 2009.

Orr, Stanley. "Veterans of Noir: Rewriting the Good War with Chester Himes, Dorothy B. Hughes, and John Okada." *Darkly Perfect World: Colonial Adventure, Postmodernism, and American Noir*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010. 106-132. Print.

"Our Country and Our Culture: Part III." *Partisan Review* 19 (5) (1952) 562-597. Print.

Paniccia Carden, Mary. “No-Places: Un-Made Children in Petry, Ellison, and Boyle.” *Sons and Daughters of Self-Made Men: Improvising Gender, Place, Nation in American Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010.80-107. Print.

Paredes Américo. *George Washington Gómez*. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1990. Print.

Park, You-me, and Gayle Wald. "Native Daughters in the Promised Land: Gender, Race, and the Question of Separate Spheres." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 70.3 (1998): 607-633. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

Pérez, Héctor. “Voicing Resistance on the Border: A Reading of Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gomez*.” *MELUS* 23 (1) 27-48. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 23 Jun 2010.

Peterson, Rachel. “Invisible Hands at Work: Domestic Service and Meritocracy in Ann Petry’s Novels.” *Revising the Blue Print: Ann Petry and the Literary Left*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. 72-96. Print.

Petty, Miriam J. “Passing for Horror: Race, Fear, and Elia Kazan’s *Pinky*.” *Genders Online Journal* (40) 2004. 45 paragraphs. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 28 Jun 2010.

Petry, Ann. “On the Lighter Side.” *People’s Voice* 17 October 1942: 16. Microform.

---. “On the Lighter Side.” *People’s Voice* 24 October 1942: 24. Microform.

---. “On the Lighter Side.” *People’s Voice* 07 November 1942: 16. Microform.

---. “On the Lighter Side.” *People’s Voice* 21 November 1942: 28. Microform.

---. “On the Lighter Side.” *People’s Voice* 09 January 1943: 26. Microform.

---. “The Novel as Social Criticism.” *The Writer’s Book*. Ed. Helen Hull. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950. 31-39. Print.

---. *The Street: A Novel*. New York: A Mariner Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974 (1946). Print.

---. “U.S. will fail as World Leader if Ruled by Jimcro—Mrs. FDR.” *People’s Voice* 08 May 1943: 7. Microform.

Pfaelzer, Jean. “*Salt of the Earth*: Women, Class, and the Utopian Imagination.” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 16.1 (1999): n.p. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 28 Jan 2011.

Phillips, William. “Our Country and Our Culture: Part III.” *Partisan Review* 19 (5) (1952) 585-593. Print.

Pick, Robert. “A Refugee Looks at Anti-Semitism Here: The Differences between European and American Patterns. *Commentary* 6 (1948) 207-213. Print.

Pinky. Screen play by . Dir. Elia Kazan. Perf. Jeanne Crain, Ethel Barrymore and Ethel Waters. 20th Century Fox, 1949. DVD.

Packard, Vance. *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America and the Hidden Barriers that Affect You, Your Community, Your Future*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959. Print.

Pospíšil, Tomáš. “The Liberal Message Films of the Late 1940s and the Position of African-Americans.” *Brno Studies in English* 2004 30 (10): 179-87. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug 2009.

Powell, Adam Clayton. “Calling America: Which City Next?” *People’s Voice* 26 June 1943: 16. Microform.

---. “Soapbox.” *People’s Voice* 21 November 1942: 5. Microform.

---. “Soapbox.” *People’s Voice* 12 December 1942: 5. Microform.

---. “Soapbox In Washington.” *People’s Voice* 24 March 1945: 5. Mircroform.

---. “A ‘Walled’ City for Aryans in Manhattan.” *People’s Voice* 12 June 1943: 16. Microform.

Pryse, Marjorie. “‘Pattern Against the Sky’: Deism and Motherhood in Ann Petry’s *The Street*.” *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*. Ed. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. 116-31. Print.

Ransom, Llewellyn. “ Landlords Say Rents are Fair in Proportion to Their Taxes … But Their Taxes Go Up only after House Income Rises.” *People’s Voice* 5 December 1942: 3. Microform.

“Rent Ceiling Drive to Open in Harlem: Church and Insurance Leaders Will Begin Today a 10-Day Campaign for OPA Aid.” *New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Sep 06, 1942. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times* (1851-2006) pg. 34. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 23 Apr 2009.

Renteln, Alison Dundes. “A Psychohistorical Analysis of the Japanese American Internment.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 17.1 (1995): 618-648. Print.

Riesman, David and Nathan Glazer. “The Intellectuals and the Discontented Classes.” *The New American Right*. Ed. Daniel Bell. New York: Criterion Books, 1955. 56-90. Print.

Robinson, Lillian S. “Out of the Mine and into the Canyon: Working Class Feminism, Yesterday and Today.” *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*. Ed. David E. James and Rick Berg. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 172-192. Print.

Roffman, Peter and Jim Purdy. *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair, and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981. Print.

Rogin, Michael. *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. Print.

---. “‘Democracy and Burnt Cork’: The End of Blackface, the Beginning of Civil Rights.” *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994) 1-34. Print.

Rollins, Peter C. “Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* Film Series and Our American Dream.” *Journal of American Culture* 19.4 (1996): 81-86. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 15 March 2011. PDF.

Rollins, Peter C. and John E. O’Connor. *Why We Fought: America’s War in Film and History*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2008. Print.

Rosaldo, Renato. “Politics, Patriarchs, and Laughter.” *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987) 65-86. Print.

Sakai, Naoki. “Two Negations: Fear of Being Excluded and the Logic of Self-Esteem.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 37.3 (2004): 229-57. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 20 Jan 2011. PDF.

Saldívar, José David. “Américo Paredes and Decolonization.” *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 292-311. Print.

---. *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Print.

Saldívar, Ramón. “The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes’s *George Washington Gómez* and Chicano Literature at the End of the Twentieth Century.” *American Literary History* 5 (2) (1993) 272-93. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 24 Jun 2010.

---. *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

---. *Chicano Narrative: The Dialects of Difference*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. Print.

Salt of the Earth. *California Quarterly* 2.4 (1953). Print.

Salt of the Earth. Dir. Herbert J. Biberman. Perf. Rosaura Revueltas and Juan Chacón. Independent Productions Corporation and the International Union of Mine

Mill and Smelter Workers, 1953. DVD.

Sarkowsky, Katja. “Democratic Iterations: Articulations of ‘Citizenship’ in Contemporary Canadian and American Literatures.” *Virtually American? Denationalizing North American Studies*. Ed. Mita Banerjee. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009. 97-109. Print.

Sato, Gayle K. Fujita. “Momotaro’s Exile: John Okada’s *No-No Boy*.” *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. Ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. 239-258. Print.

Schaub, Thomas Hill. *American Fiction in the Cold War*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. Print.

Schedler, Christopher. “Inscribing Mexican-American Modernism in Américo Paredes’ *George Washington Gómez*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 42 (2) (2000) 157-74. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 26 Jun 2010.

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007 (1949). Print.

Scott, Lillian. “A Hollywood Independent Shows Studios How It’s Done: He’s Stan Kramer, ‘Brave’s Champion.’” *Chicago Defender* 14 May 1949, 16. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Scott, William. "Material Resistance and the Agency of the Body in Ann Petry's The

Street." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 78.1 (2006): 89-116. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

Sedore, Timothy S. "Solace in Solitude: An American Adamic Alienation and José Antonio Villarreal's *Pocho*. *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 2000 Aug; 11 (2): 239-59. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 30 Oct 2010.

Seiler, Cotton. "'So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By': African American Automobility and Cold War Liberalism." *American Quarterly* 45 (2006): 1091-1117. Print.

Shirley, Carl R. "Pocho: Bildungsroman of a Chicano." *Revista Chicano-Riquena* 7.2 (1979): 63-68. Print.

Shockley, Evie. "Buried Alive: Gothic Homelessness, Black Women's Sexuality, and (Living) Death in Ann Petry's The Street." *African American Review* 40.3 (2006): 439-460. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

Simpson, Caroline Chung. *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. Print.

Simpson, Donald. "Black Images in Film—the 1940s to the Early 1960s." *The Black Scholar* 21 (1991): 20-29. Print.

"Socially Conscious Films." *Bilingual Review/Revista bilingüe*. 18 (May/Dec 1993): 127-

135. Print.

Sokolowski, Jeanne. “Internment and Post-War Japanese American Literature: Toward a Theory of Divine Citizenship.” *MELUS* 34.1 (2009) 69-93. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 13 Jan 2011. PDF.

Solar, Valerie. “‘We were Close to Freedom and yet Far from it’: Dislocation, Emplacement, and the Japanese American Internment.” *The Camp: Narratives of Internment and Exclusion*. Ed. Colman Hogan and Marta Marín Dòmine. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. 115-136. Print.

“Soldiers, Sailors, Salvage and V for Victory.” *People’s Voice* 24 July 1943: 8. Microform.

Solomon, Irvin D. and Marty Ambrose. “Race and Gender Conflict in Ann Petry’s *The Street*: Lessons in Symbolic Interactionism from the ‘Middle Period’ of Black Litertature.” *McNeese Review* 37 (1999): 1-13. Print.

Sone, Monica. *Nisei Daughter*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979 (1953). Print.

---. “Preface to the 1979 Edition.” *Nisei Daughter*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1953. Print.

Sorensen, Leif. “The Anti-*Corrido* of George Washington Gómez: A Narrative of Emergent Subject Formation.” *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 80 (1) (2008) 111-40. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 23 Jun 2010.

Star, Jimmy. “Daily Diary.” *The Evening Herald and Express*. No other information.

Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

"Start Screening 'Home of the Brave.'" *Chicago Defender*, March 5, 1949. 16. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Storhoff, Gary. "'A Prisoner Forever': Cognitive Distortions and Depression in John Okada's *No-No Boy*." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* 6.1 (2004): 1-20. Print.

Stouffer, Samuel A. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties: A Cross-Section of the Nation Speaks its Mind*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955. Print.

Sumida, Stephen H. "Protest and Accommodation, Self-Satire and Self-Effacement, and Monica Sone's *Nisei Daughter*." *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*. Ed. James Robert Payne. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992. 207-247. Print.

"Tenant League Public Meeting to Start Fight on High Rents." *People's Voice* 14 August 1943: 15. Microform.

"Training Centers Listed; 'Act Now.'" *People's Voice* 07 November 1942: 6. Microform.

"Two Negro WAACs Promoted to First Lieutenant Posts." *People's Voice* 02 January 1943: 7. Microform.

"Uncle Sam asks Housewives to Help Find Defense Workers." *People's Voice* 16 January 1943: 28. Microform.

United States Office of War Information, Bureau of Motion Pictures. *The Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*. Office of War Information. n.p. 1942. Digital Archive: GIMMPI. Indiana University at Bloomington. Web. 15 Mar 2011.

Vallejos, Tomás. "José Antonio Villarreal." *Chicano Writers: First Series*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1989. 282-288. Print.

Vargas, Zaragosa. *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Print.

Viereck, Peter. *Conservativism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt, 1815-1949*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949. Print.

---. *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals: Babbit Jr. vs. the Rediscovery of Values*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953. Print.

---. *The Unadjusted Man: A New Hero for Americans: Reflections on the Distinction Between Conforming and Conserving*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1956. Print.

Villarreal, José Antonio. *Pocho*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989 (1959). Print.

Wall, Wendy. *Inventing the 'American Way': The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Wallace, Michele. "Race, Gender and Psychoanalysis in Forties Film: *Lost Boundaries, Home of the Brave* and *The Quiet One*." *Black American Cinema*. Ed. Manthia Diawara. New York: Routledge, 1993. 257-71. Print.

Wang, Qun. "'Double Consciousness,' Sociological Imagination, and the Asian American

Experience." *Race, Gender and Class: Asian American Voices* 4.3 (1997): 88-94. Print.

"Wanna be a WAM? Go to Jersey City." *People's Voice* 17 October 1942: 17. Microform.

"War Job Boom will give Work to Harlemites." *People's Voice* 22 May 1943: 3. Microform.

Wesling, Meg. "The Opacity of Everyday Life: Segregation and the Iconicity of Uplift in *The Street*." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* (*AL*) 2006 Mar; 78 (1): 117-40. Print.

White, Walter. "Courageous New Picture." No other information. Stanley Kramer Archives. Box 336. Scrapbook for *Champion* and *Home of the Brave*. Special Collections Library. University of California Los Angeles. Print.

Why We Fight: War Comes To America. Dir. Frank Capra. 1945. The United State War Department, Army Pictorial Service for the Information and Education Division. *Internet Archive*. Web. 14 Mar 2011.

Whyte, William H. Jr. *The Organization Man*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956. Print.

Wilkerson, Doxey A. "Roosevelt's Gift to Negro Will Never be Destroyed." *People's Voice* 21 April 1945: 2. Microfilm.

Williams, Charles. "Harlem at War." *The Nation* 16 January 1943, 86-88. Print.

Wilson, Michael. *Salt of the Earth: Screenplay*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1978. Print.

Wright, Richard. "The Ethnics of Living Jim Crow." *Uncle Tom's Children*. New York:

Perennial, 2000 (1940). 1-15. Print.

Wylie, Philip. *Generation of Vipers*. Chicago: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1955 (1942). Print.

Xu, Wenying. “Sticky Rice Balls or Lemon Pie: Enjoyment and Ethnic Identities in *No-No Boy* and *Obasan*.” *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory* 13.1 (2002): 51-68. *MLA International Bibliography*. The University of Texas at Austin. 20 Jan 2011. PDF.

Yarborough, Richard. "The Quest for the American Dream in Three Afro-American Novels: *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, *The Street*, and *Invisible Man*." *MELUS* 8.4 (1981): 33-59. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCO. The University of Texas at Austin. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

Yeh, William. “To Belong or Not to Belong: The Liminality of John Okada’s *No-No Boy*.” *American Journal* 19.1 (1993): 121-33. Print.

Yogi, Stan. “The Collapse of Difference: Dysfunctional and Inverted Celebrations in John Okada’s *No-No Boy*.” *Revue Française d’Études Américaines* 53 (1992): 233-44. Print.